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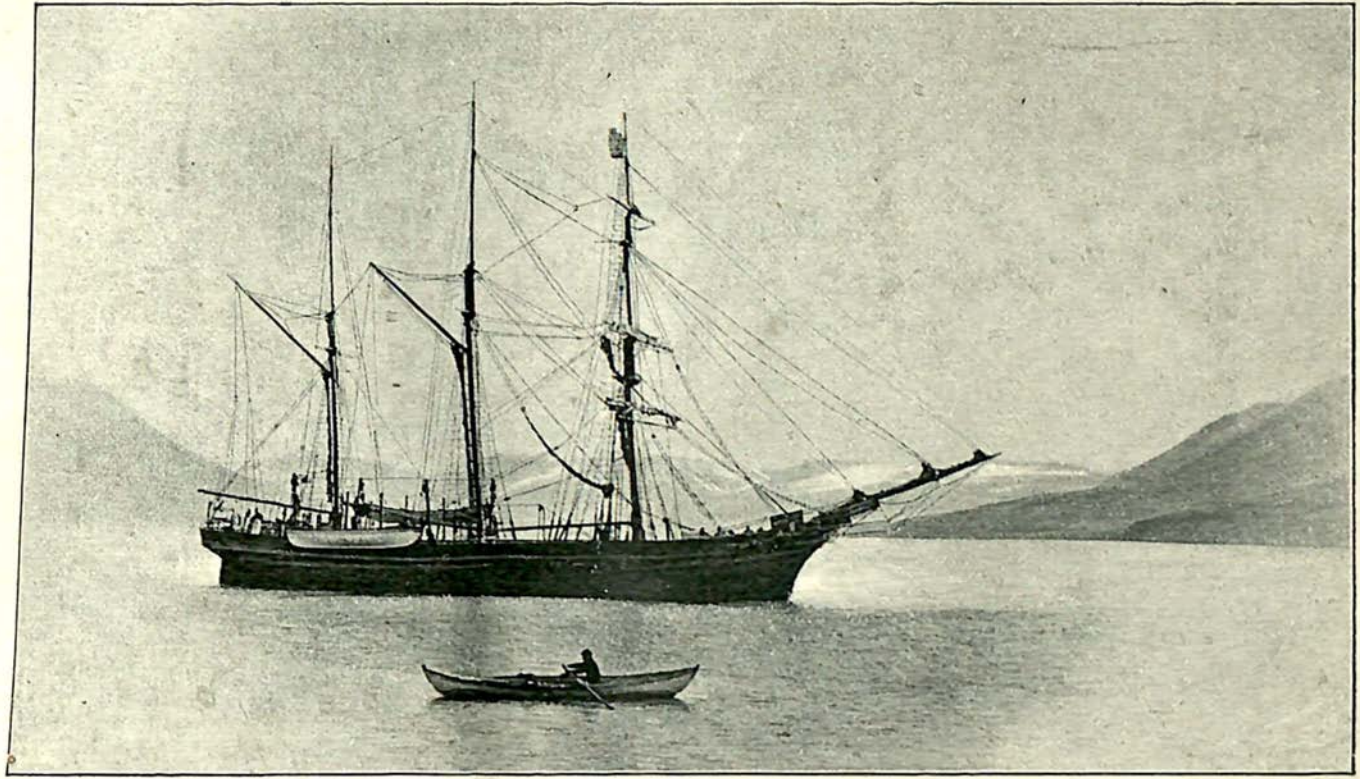

THE 'TRAVELLER.'

THE

SKIPPER IN ARCTIC SEAS

BY

WALTER J. CLUTTERBUCK

JOINT AUTHOR OF 'THREE IN NORWAY' AND 'B. C. 1887'

'The traveller can reckon his setting out, but not his return'
(Arab Proverb)

WITH MAP AND THIRTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS

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NOTE

WHEN I first thought of publishing this book, it occurred to me that I must give it a name—and therefore wrote to my publishers suggesting 'The Skipper at Sea, being the account of a Landlubber on the Ocean.' But Messrs. Longman objected to this title on the score that it had scarcely any reference whatever to the work, and would give the public no clue to what was written within these pages. I roamed the earth for many days with my hands in my pockets in a terrible condition of indecision, searching around that great vacancy my brain for some suitable title, and at length came to the conclusion that it was impossible in this universe to find any name which would apply to such a conglomeration of foolishness as is enrolled in these pages. Therefore I left it to them to name the book for me, and they called it

THE SKIPPER IN ARCTIC SEAS.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE 'TRAVELLER'	1
II.	ICE	10
III.	THE SHIP'S ARRANGEMENTS	18
IV.	JAN MAYEN	26
V.	BIRDS	34
VI.	THE CROW'S NEST	40
VII.	NORWEGIAN SHIPS	46
VIII.	NO SEALS YET	53
IX.	SEALS	61
X.	SEAL SHOOTING	69
XI.	ON DECK	80
XII.	TEN DAYS' FOG	88
XIII.	FOG CONTINUED	94
XIV.	THOSE MOLLIES	103
XV.	MY WATCH	110
XVI.	THE SKIPPER AND THE SLEEPY CAPTAIN	122

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVII.	CAPTAIN ROBERTSON'S TELESCOPE	141
XVIII.	OUR LAST DAY'S SEAL SHOOTING	150
XIX.	OUR SECOND MATE	157
XX.	BROWN'S NAUTICAL ALMANACK	163
XXI.	SPITZBERGEN IN THE DISTANCE	173
XXII.	I QUARREL WITH THE CAPTAIN	183
XXIII.	THE POLAR BEAR	191
XXIV.	REINDEER	197
XXV.	SHARKS	214
XXVI.	AMONGST THE FIORDS	219
XXVII.	STILL AMONGST THE FIORDS	228
XXVIII.	AN EIDER DUCK'S INTERIOR	242
XXIX.	HOMEWARD BOUND	246
XXX.	THE END OF THE VOYAGE	256
XXXI.	WHALES	259
	OUR UNITED BAG	270

ILLUSTRATIONS

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE 'TRAVELLER'	*Frontispiece*	
OUR CAPTAIN	*To face page*	16
JAN MAYEN	,,	26
CUTTING THE BLUBBER OFF SEALSKINS	,,	64
TWO HONEST TARS	,,	84
JACK'S BOAT STARTING AFTER SEALS	,,	116
THREE OF OUR CREW	,,	122
ONE OF US	,,	138
THE SEVEN SISTERS, SPITZBERGEN	,,	170
THE WRECKED NORWEGIAN KETCH	,,	180
ICE FIORD	,,	196
BIRDS SHOT ON ICE FIORD	,,	214
THE WESTERN SHORE OF DICKSON'S BAY	,,	218
PULLING OUR BOAT ASHORE IN DICKSON'S BAY	,,	228
DISTANT MOUNTAIN FROM ICE FIORD, BETWEEN 3,000 AND 4,000 FEET HIGH	,,	230
END OF GLACIER COMING DOWN INTO ICE FIORD	,,	234
ABRUPT CONCLUSION OF GLACIER IN ICE FIORD	,,	238
DEAD MAN'S HEAD AT THE ENTRANCE OF ICE FIORD	,,	246
THE LAST OF THE ICE	,,	250

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

PAGE

AN ICEBERG 15

INSIDE OUR CABIN 22

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE INTERIOR 23

MOLLIES 36

THE CROW'S NEST 42

THE LOG-DIAL. AS IT OUGHT TO BE; ACCORDING TO JACK'S RECONSTRUCTION 56

SEALS' HEADS 74

THE AFTER-DINNER PIPE 81

PULLING ON SEA BOOTS 86

THE OIL CAN 96

A WILD MALLEMOKE 104

MOLLIES FOLLOWING THE SHIP 108

LOOSE PACK ICE 112

OUR HAMS 148

THE MAP OF ICE FIORD 198

SHARK FISHING 216

A STRANGE BIRD 231

OUR SAILORS' TENT 236

A HORRIBLE STATE OF THINGS 253

THE GREENLAND RIGHT WHALE:—SMOKING; YAWNING; IN AGONY 260

THE SKIPPER IN ARCTIC SEAS

CHAPTER I

THE 'TRAVELLER'

EVEN in these days of steam and electricity not many sportsmen make for the Arctic Seas; and I fully believe that there may be some travellers wrapped in their rugs on a long railway journey, or tired of their fellow passengers in the saloon of an electric-lighted steamboat, who have minds on occasion so vacant, or time so much at their disposal, that they will be amused at this accumulation of twaddle, and may, instead of being bored to death, derive some pleasure, if not advantage, from the perusal of these pages.

It is not always that amusement and mental improvement can be combined in one trip, and I think

it may be safely asserted that during our voyage to the arctic regions in the summer of '88, we were freed from the strain of such a combination. At any rate, we were not afflicted with a longing to improve our minds, even if we had any such glorious opportunity afforded us; but for amusement we possessed the most dreadful craving. However this may be, here is my little book; and please congratulate us at the very start, that we got safely back without having our ears frozen off, or our noses 'caught' by the frost; for both my companion and I are land-lubbers by birth and profession, and knew nothing about the place we were going to, or of the 'paraphernalia' of arctic travel; so that I hope many of the things which seemed new, and were before unknown to us, may excite in the reader's mind some of the interest they did in ours.

It was at the end of March, in the year of grace 1888, that we decided to visit the unknown, that is, we thought of going up north, and coasting along the ice off Greenland from latitude 70 to 75. With this object in view we went to Peterhead, a small town on

the east coast of Scotland, where we had engaged an ordinary whaling vessel to take us on our adventures. Peterhead is a remarkably ugly, cold, granite-built little sea-port, rather more than half way up the east coast of Scotland. It is from this port that nearly all the British ships which go up whaling in the Arctic Ocean make their start, and here too they rest during the winter months, when their cruises for the year are over.

Here we found our ship, the 'Traveller.' She was a real old-fashioned, tubby, three-masted schooner, or 'Barkantine,' as the Americans call her rig (and correctly I believe), of about two hundred and ten tons register, and she carried fourteen sails; but as drawing ships is not my forte, and I had no opportunity of taking a photograph of her with her sails up, the representation in the frontispiece does her but scant justice. The foremast has four square sails on it, and in accordance with the rigging of these, she could not go so near the wind by two points as if she were rigged like an ordinary schooner. There are, I believe, some two-masted schooner yachts, rigged with square sails on their foremasts, which (so I am told)

can go as near the wind as an ordinarily rigged schooner, as they have only two square sails up above, and a foresail like our mainsail down below, so that they can get their square sails round to the wind, whereas we could not get our four square sails round on account of the rigging.

This 'Traveller' was made at Peterhead, under our captain's own supervision, as he had her built for himself, and was down at the building yard day by day, watching her construction, and seeing each board put together. She was doubly walled in with the strongest American oak from the water-line downwards, and there was a tripling of oak in her bows, so that she should be able to resist the ice all round ; in fact she was as good a boat for strength and solidity as one could wish to come across. I have very little else to say about her, except that there was a double pump for the sailors to work every morning when the bells struck eight; and they did play at working it, but she took in no water to speak of, so that they had not to be pumping for more than three minutes—a proof that the 'Traveller' was wonderfully tight.

And now about my comrade in search of sport. He went (and still goes) by the name of 'Jack,' and he was last year, and is still I believe, six foot two inches high,—immensely strong, with light hair, light moustache, blue eyes,—the type of an honest Englishman. But although he was such a good fellow, I am obliged to mention that Jack knew little, and I knew less, about the sea—from a sailor's point of view. Of course we neither of us knew what a 'bentic boom' was, 'beckles on the wheel,' or 'vangs.' But we did not even know why sailors talked of the 'topmast stays,' instead of the 'top*most* stays;' or what was a mizzen gaff-tops'l, or a 'top-gallant fore-castle.' In addition to these there were a multitude of other questionable articles, which we constantly heard the men talking about amongst themselves, such as 'boat's piggins,' 'serving mallets,' and 'stab-bers,' the spelling of which words I cannot guarantee, as they do not appear in the Midland Spelling Book or Webster's Dictionary.

There are two things which we never could make out. They were put on the fore-rigging;

Heaven knows what they are for, unless they are to amuse the sailors when there is nothing else to do. But the captain used to look terribly grave when he gave the order, 'Mr. Mate, will you see that the men cover those Scotchmen with new foxes?' or was it, 'Will you see that the men cover those foxes with new Scotchmen?'—I forget. However, the men used to set to work at once to rip the binding off those ropes which connect the foremast with the bulwarks, and put on fresh binding. To us there seemed no possible advantage in having these ropes covered in certain places with Scotchmen and foxes, but without doubt it ought to keep them cosily away from the frost, if there is any use in this; and it kept the sailors amused for four days, as it requires a lot of unbinding old ropes and then plaiting them up again. And not till the captain saw that all his men had got their trousers and fingers, and the floor (no, I mean the deck) in a horrible condition of mess from the tar which was used in the rebinding, did he seem satisfied. One day I saw the mate making a rather neat knot at the end of a piece of rope that they have on to the clapper

of the bell, and I foolishly asked him what he called this sort of thing he was making. He said, 'Well, you see, this is a "Matthew Walker's" knot, not a "Liverpool rigger's" knot.' Then I felt like a naughty schoolboy, as this nautical point was too knotty for my comprehension, and I therefore gave it up.

Of the sea itself (as I have said) we knew very little, except that it was a dismally damp place, where if you are not sick, you are at any rate bored to death. It is just a sheet of everlasting water (at least this sea was), which is either too rough to be pleasant, or else too calm to proceed on in a sailing vessel.

Board ship life is one where a man is either troubled with perpetually being in his own society, or if he 'pals' with his companions in misery, he feels sure he has told them the same tales half a dozen times before, and although a goodnatured fellow-traveller can laugh at the same tale twice, he gets bored if you repeat, 'Don't you know Mrs. Jones simply laughed internally and pretended not to understand, but, &c. &c.,' five times in his confiding ear. So what is there to do, except just walk up and down deck, smoke till your

mouth is sore, look forward to your meals, and in case of sea-sickness drink champagne? But above all things do not think. It is a bad thing to think, for the first thing which strikes a thoughtful man is what a fool he has been to leave his delightful English home, where memory makes the picture fairer than it really is, and it seems in his imagination always to be a mid-summer's day, without any flies, where he hears the pike plashing in the distant lake, where the smell of hay is wafted to him on the midday breeze, and he is droning away his time, idly listening to the distant chaffinch's call. Stretched perhaps at full length beneath the shadow of one of our English elms, 'sic temere jacentes,' with men and women in the distance turning up the British hay (with, I regret to say, American forks), and nothing beyond but green branches, and spotless blue sky—oh, there is nothing like making hay or love in the English summer-time:

With the throstle's soft fluting
And swallows about,
When the hedges are shooting
And the bulrushes out.

But I am forgetting that my desire was to describe the sea and not the land. Well, there is nothing in this Arctic Ocean but fog; for ten days at a stretch we saw only an indistinct nothingness, because of the wet frosty vapour which surrounded the ship, and our only recompense was listening to the distant bark—no, cry—of one far-off seal, as during all that time we could see nothing. I will not say that we could feel nothing. Would that such had been the case; but the perpetual icicles which fell out of the rigging on our devoted heads resembled, I should think, the way the brimstone would fall during a storm in the nether regions. If this be the case we should very strongly recommend those who are able, to keep under shelter or to wear a cast-iron wide-awake, if they can afford it, whenever they may be condemned to everlasting perdition, as we found the only place of safety was our cabin, which we stuck to in preference to going out among these enormous hailstones, which, as Jack remarked, 'did make an ice ickle mess of our deck.'

CHAPTER II

ICE

OUR crew consisted of Jack and myself; then there was the captain; he differed from us in that he knew all about the sea, and the ways and lore of seafaring men. We made friends with him before we went on board, and that friendship increased every day of our voyage, culminating in hearty regret when five months later we left him on board the 'Traveller' at Peterhead.

Besides this, there were the first and second mate, steward, cook, carpenter (a nice lad of nineteen years), with eight other hands, making in all, exclusive of our two selves, a crew of fourteen men.

Our steward was not a man to put confidence in; he shook it very much when we first came on board, after which we felt we could not trust him. We had two

bottles of whisky before leaving port, to try; but not liking them we sent them back. This steward had these bottles confided to his care, to return to the stores, the evening before we started. However, on his way from the harbour to the town he just drew one cork and tasted the contents of the bottle; he liked the sample and finished the bottle. Then he tried to remember where he was, and what the name of the shop was to which he was to take the bottles; but no, he could not by this time call anything to mind: he could not even remember what his own name was. So he sat down by the side of the wharf to think it up, and kept on thinking and thinking till he fell asleep, and slept soundly till the morning. I remember hearing of an American who gave the following anecdote of himself. 'Jos and I felt very cold, so we went up to take something to skeer the chills away, and I, for one, felt very much like sampling some whiskies. Well, when all was ready, we raised our glasses with a brilliant flank movement and placed ourselves outside that liquor. I soon saw that Jos was so limpsey drunk that he could not walk, and even I was possessed

with an eager desire to drop right down there and sleep it off.' This condition of 'limpsey' drunkenness was our steward's when he sank to rest on the wharf. Next day, the day on which we left Peterhead, he came 'aboard ship,' apparently better, but only better; the day after that, however, he was himself again, and a very inferior, dirty, brainless self it was.

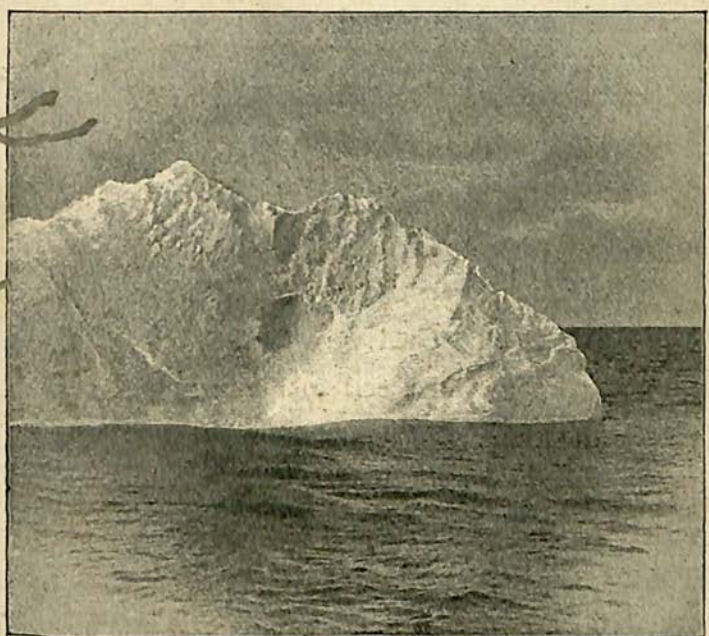
I said above that we were going to visit the unknown; why I said the 'unknown' is because the ice amongst which we were ever wandering is always on the move, so that you cannot tell, till you get there, whether you will have to tack up and down three hundred miles from the coast on the eastern side of Greenland, or whether you can get nearer in shore, and do your wanderings only two hundred miles from the coast. When you see a zigzag line of ice before you, it will be all altered by the wind in a couple of hours, so that you would not recognise it again, even if you scanned it over most carefully; as all the ice has the same general appearance, and it is only now and then that one comes across a pinnacle higher than the rest. You could not therefore recognise your where-

abouts by the indentures, which keep changing so much that it is difficult to fix your mind on any one piece for more than a few hours. Every wind, every current, changes the position, and the piece of ice which you saw only an hour ago has not only shifted its situation but changed its whole shape. It is almost as hopeless trying to find your whereabouts in a sea of ice, as struggling to trace the flakes of a snowstorm as they become immersed in a sea of fallen whiteness.

There is a great current of ice running down from the northwards, probably starting from the North Pole. It is like a very broad, deep, and still river, having quantities of eddies in its course, and often the loose ice nearest you will present to your eye one side to-day and the opposite side to-morrow, as it is constantly turning and moving in its progress southwards. Yet this huge ice body, which is to be found on the east coast of Greenland, and which was in the beginning of May 270 miles broad between the island of Jan Mayen and that country, and apparently kept increasing in breadth towards the north, was all on the downward move, which we believe

to be the case the whole year round. Against this vast pack, which looks to our eyes so still and immovable, the huge breakers continually dash, making an everlasting distant moaning roar. These thick blocks of ice, which average only about three feet above the water's surface, but which probably extend twenty-four feet below it, are ever moving downwards past us, till they reach a temperature above freezing point, when they gradually melt away, and disappear from sight. We should say that there is certainly as much as seven times the amount of ice under water that there is above. But Nordenskiold has told us, talking of icebergs, 'The true icebergs have a height above the water rising to a hundred metres They often ground in a depth of two hundred to three hundred metres.' These must be, I should think, icebergs of rather a peculiar shape, for allowing that they have (putting it at the least) seven times as much below the water as there is above, what very pointed cones they must come to. Again he says, 'It was sixteen fathoms high, and grounded in a depth of thirty-six fathoms.' This seems unlikely with sea-

ice, but then the icebergs of which Nordenskiold is talking are altogether fresh water, and must have come off a glacier somewhere up north, as sea-ice



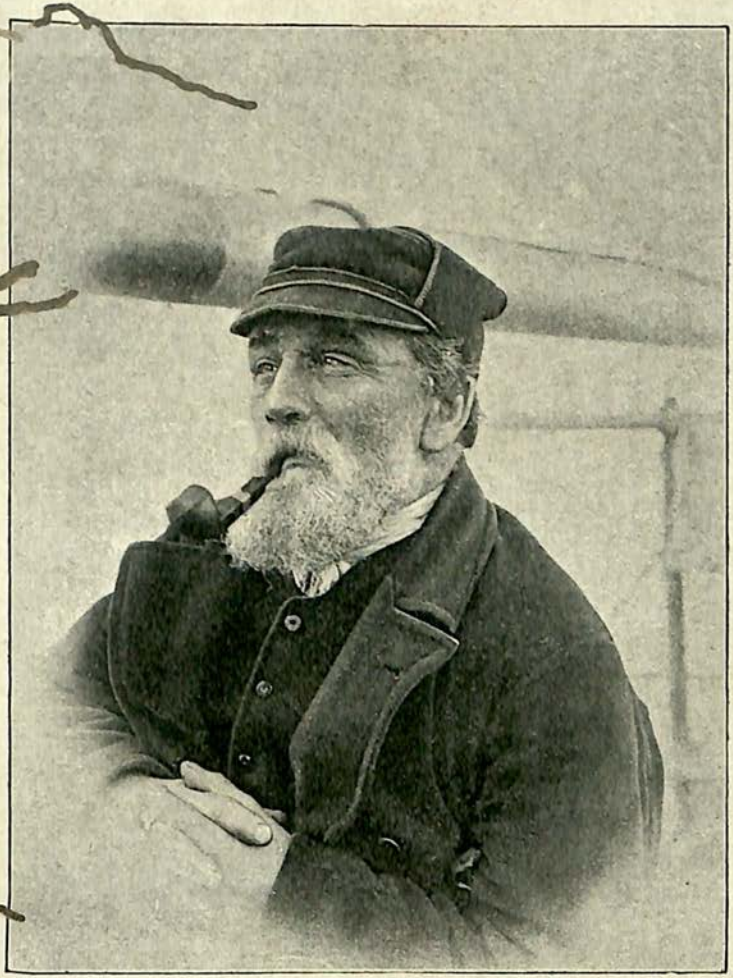
AN ICEBERG.

never attains anything like the height of one hundred metres. Sea-ice is not altogether fresh: our captain told us that water made by dissolving this sea-ice could be drunk, but had a saline flavour, which

we do not doubt. Nordenskiold also says, 'The older sea-ice is, the less salt does it contain.'

Our voyage, although it gave our captain much pleasure, was not in every way a success, owing partly to the above-recorded obstacles presented by the ice, and partly to other climatic influences. We did not get as far north as the East Island of Spitzbergen, in the first place because of this great barrier of ice, which was fixed there during the summer, and next because the wind blew from the north the whole summer through, and only when we wanted to come home again would it condescend to blow from the south. The consequence was, that although we killed seals innumerable, and many strange birds, we only got one polar bear, and never succeeded in reaching the home of the walrus. The carpenter, I have said, we took with us.

Our idea, however, in going along the Greenland ice, was to see if we could kill some seals. The seals are in the habit of perching on these blocks, in order that they may get rid of the blubber which covers their bodies beneath the skin. They scramble



OUR CAPTAIN.

upon the ice, therefore, and, we fancy, 'sweat' it out of themselves. This seems impossible, when one comes to consider that the thermometer is almost always below freezing, and sitting on the ice is not what we should call a cosy way of passing the day; but they seem to find it wonderfully warm in comparison with the water. You constantly see them scratching their backs, and rolling on the ice just as if it were a lot of hay, or a hearth-rug. They stop like this at any rate for the space of four days. How much longer they would stop, Heaven knows, but we do not, as they were always disturbed by the avenging rifle: but a space of four days *was* counted by us, during which some seals remained with empty stomachs, apparently only waiting for their end.

CHAPTER III

THE SHIP'S ARRANGEMENTS

ON May 1, 1888, we sailed away from Peterhead, quitting port under the most favourable auspices, as not only was it a fine day with a sou'-westerly wind a blowing, but lots of friendly folk came down to see us off, so that there were three or four hundred people assembled on the wharf when we left, all waving handkerchiefs and apparently wishing us good luck, although no doubt glad not to be on board; for many of them knew too well the temper of the sea, how fickle, how inconsistent she may be; and that although we were sailing away with our spirits up, still we might be ever so sea-sick, and only wishing for the end, before that cheerful sun had set behind the Scottish hills.

No sooner were we outside the harbour than a

deathly feeling of sickness did creep over me, so that I retired to my cabin, and remained there in a condition of misery for two days. On the second day I said to Jack, 'And this is what they call the pleasures of yachting, is it? Well, I am with the "Sporting Times," in holding that it is a vastly overrated amusement. Give me the now far-off days when I wished to eat something.' Oh, the bitterness of my soul when I reflected that four months at least of pitching and tossing must intervene before my legs could be contentedly tucked under the social board of a London club or an English home.

The carpenter, who had never been away on the ocean before, was the youngest of our sailors, a mere boy, and he too was sea-sick. While, therefore, I was lying prone in my comfortable berth, at intervals drinking champagne, and grumbling at my lot, this poor boy was on deck, or in his stuffy cabin for'ard. I had nothing to do except cuss that steward if he did not bring me all I wanted, while this unfortunate lad was out in the cold, cold wind, acquiring a notion of the motion of the ocean, and sacrificing on the

altar of Neptune all that he held to be most necessary to the sustenance of life, without even the satisfaction of knowing that he was feeding the fish, because we believed that out in mid ocean, as we were now, there were no fish on its surface.

Well, the time soon came when we were both of us able to look on these sufferings as things of the past, and almost to enjoy life the more at the recollection of them. What said Virgil in the days when I was a boy, and had my pockets stuffed with string, nuts, and beeswax? 'Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.' And some day perhaps the ship's carpenter will derive pleasure from calling to mind even such unpleasant memories as these.

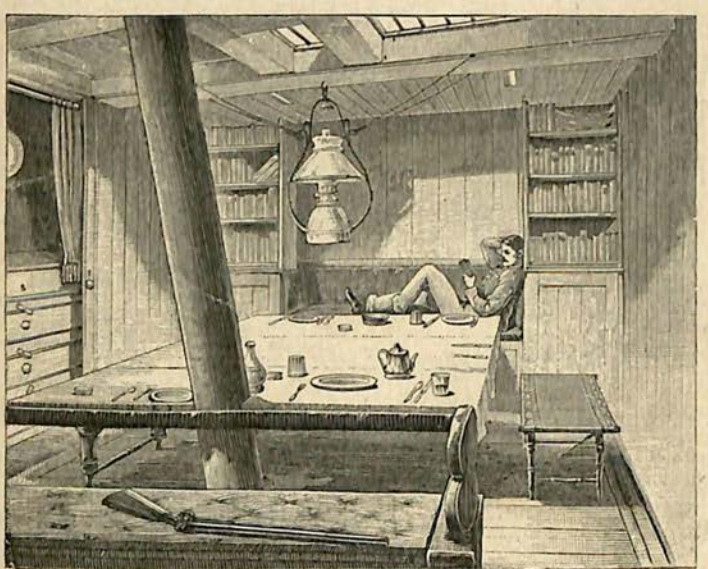
When we had been at sea about a week it began to freeze, and we had to promenade on the poop-deck, for it was still pretty rough, and the waves kept breaking over the main-deck and freezing there, making it terribly slippery, and covering the bowsprit with a sheet of thick white ice, so that the bows of the vessel looked quite picturesque. The cold would have been nothing by itself, as the thermometer

only registered about five degrees of frost, but with a strong freezing wind blowing over us from the sea, it seemed almost too cold on deck to describe in words.

As soon as our young carpenter got well, he was set to work to mend some holes in our cabin floor, and it became soon a very warm and pleasant place. We had a capital stove there, which was kept burning day and night all the time that we were aboard. There was another stove in the captain's cabin, which was astern of ours, so that, when both were lighted, it made the downstairs part of our ship almost too warm, but certainly wonderfully snug. We put a long row of eleven guns in a rack by the stove side, over which came a home-made pipe-rack of polished mahogany wood, to hold nine pipes ; and on either side of a sofa at the back of the cabin were four shelves quite full of volumes of light literature. From out of the cabin two smaller ones led, which were our sleeping cabins ; they were nicely carpeted, and each one contained one berth, and a roomy washing basin on a stand. I used mine for developing my photographs.

Down by the partition between my sleeping cabin

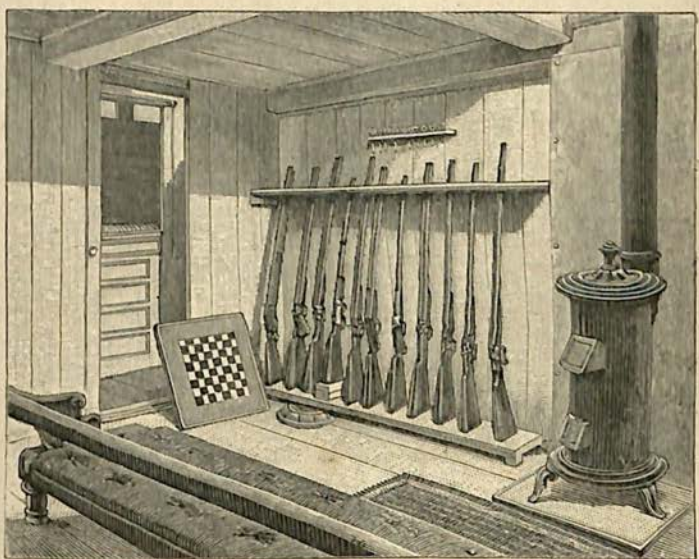
and this sort of miniature saloon, the captain had fixed a long dark green box, which, when it was opened, displayed cartridges of six different sorts, all snugly packed and lying in six different divisions. These



INSIDE OUR CABIN

were our cartridges for present use, and they were put there so that we could bolt into the cabin at a moment's notice, and seize a rifle and cartridge, with the object of annoying any seal that happened to be floating about on a loose piece of ice.

We arranged all the hams (of which at starting there were twenty) on a small beam of wood propped up by two other posts, just behind the man at the wheel, where they hung in the freezing air in a



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE INTERIOR

gloriously salubrious situation. Also there were two sides of Harris's Wiltshire bacon, doubly smoked, hanging upon the top of the mizzen mast ; to say nothing of two sides of an Aberdeenshire bullock, roped on to the mainmast. We had also two pigs (dead ones)

tied up to the davits on deck ; one pig was on my side of the deck, and one on Jack's. (In future I shall divide the whole ship into my side and Jack's, as this seems a much simpler plan, and easier to recollect, than that of putting it in extravagant nautical language and saying 'port' and 'starboard' as sailors do, my side being the 'port' and Jack's the 'starboard.') All our meat was put up in this way, in order that the frost might 'get hold of it,' which it did do jolly well, and these pigs were frozen right through in about a fortnight. They looked very beautiful indeed, hanging up there, and it was excellent for our appetites to see our well-filled larder dangling in that cool and airy position. We had only three boats on board, but they were indeed quite enough for us to be frozen to death in should the occasion arise, for my boat (the one on 'my side') would hold twelve persons comfortably ; Jack's held the same number, though the captain's was smaller ; and so, as we were only sixteen souls all told, we could afford to lose one of our boats without losing our peace of mind.

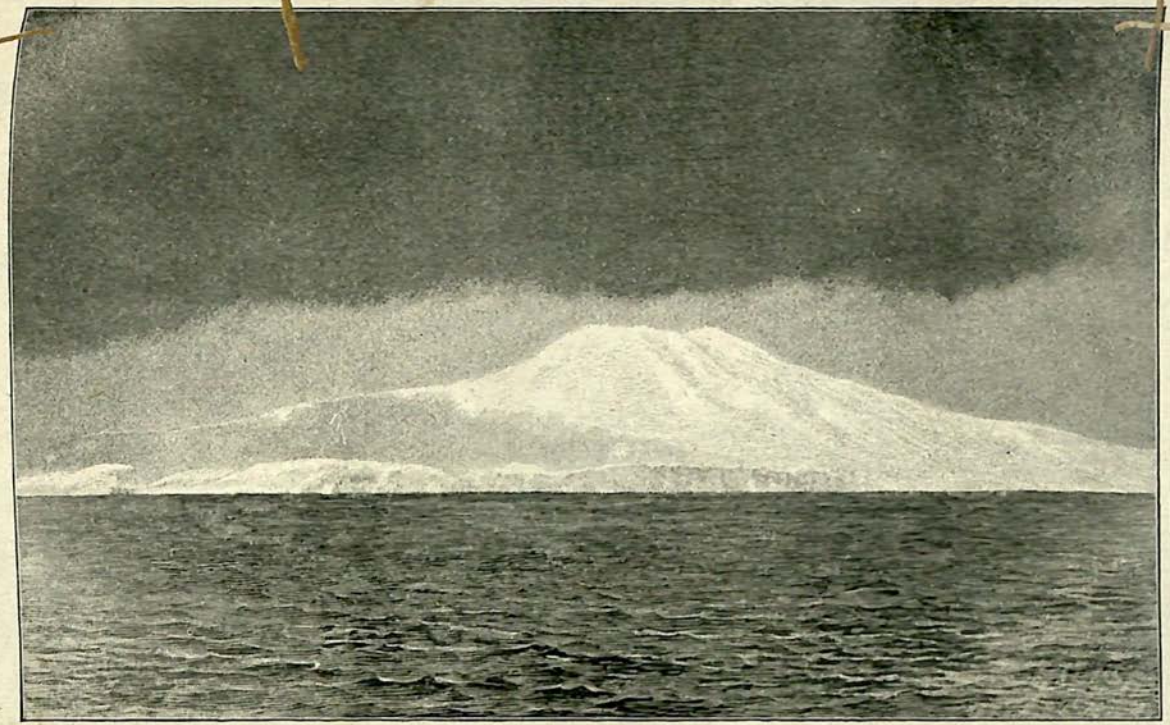
By May 11 we were able to hoist these boats on to

the davits. Hitherto they had been in the middle of the main deck, as there had been such a sea running since we left England, it was thought advisable not to hang them out; now, however, as we were getting on to the main pack of ice, we were not likely to have a heavy sea. Our two boats were what they call 'whale-boats,' that is to say they were not 'clinker built,' but had their outsides 'carvel built,' all smooth, like a German cabman's hat. They had no stern to fix a rudder to, both ends being pointed alike. They took four men each to row them, and were steered by a man with an exceedingly long oar, and instead of having ordinary rowlocks, they had a single wooden pin, with a rope quoit (such as one plays quoits with on board a P. and O. steamer) attached to each, and the oar worked through this rope ring or quoit. The Norwegians have three or four men sculling; our men pull with one oar each; but the sculling is undoubtedly the fastest method, at any rate for a short distance. Whaleboats are remarkable for their length and durability; ours were partially covered with zinc outside to protect them against the ice.

CHAPTER IV

JAN MAYEN

ON Thursday, May 3, it was just light enough to see all through the night, and on deck to read a book with large print. But after that it became much brighter, so that a week later, what with the days lengthening, and our travelling further north, the nights were very nearly the same as the days; the only difference being that the sun was much lower in the heavens during the night. So that we had by this time fairly got into the latitude of perpetual day; and although the sky was usually covered with clouds, we were led by considerations based upon the law of uniformity to infer that the sun was shining up above them all the same. We had the lamp lit in the cabin every night however. It seemed cosier and more natural to sit by the side of the stove with the



JAN MAYEN

lamp lit than without it. So with our feet on a campstool, and the rings of smoke curling up from our cigars, we looked at the sun through the skylight and pretended it was dark outside.

On May 10, after we had been nine days on this exceedingly expansive sheet of water, the Arctic Ocean, we found ourselves working up against a head wind just off the rockbound wintry shores of the island of Jan Mayen. If you look at your map you will find this bleak and barren island lying about three hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle. It is a most mountainous spot, one peak rising 6,000 odd feet into the sky. It is of course always snow-covered, and anything more terribly desolate you could not picture to your mind,—with the ocean beating on this side of it, and on the western side still nothing but the ocean, stretching as far as the eye could reach; one vast plain, covered with white ice. Desolate it is indeed; no trees, no shrubs, no living thing to gladden the eye. And yet animal life exists even on the bare white sides of the mountains of Jan Mayen. There are arctic foxes there, besides a quan-

tity of seabirds; not I believe only birds of passage who find in the island a temporary home, but regular inhabitants of the place, who build their nests and rear their young on its icy cliffs.

One wonders what the arctic foxes can find to support life in this desert of snow. The seabirds lay their eggs on inaccessible crags and ledges; I do not think the foxes would get many of these; at the same time I doubt if they can make any but the most precarious living on the bodies of the seabirds themselves. Altogether the foxes must have a bad time of it: fancy five months of perpetual, and, one would think, wearisome daylight, and then a long dark winter with no lamp at all but the moon, or perhaps the strange weird light of the aurora borealis!

This day, May 10, we encountered the first ship we had seen during our cruise. She proved to be the 'Live' of Horton, a vessel of only sixty tons. Horton is a place on the southern coast of Norway, —wearing (when I saw it) a very martial appearance, as all the Norwegian men-of-war were laid up there during the winter months. She swept down on

us intent upon having a conversation, but finding none of our crew very 'chatty,' as no one could speak a word of her language, she turned and fled again. The skipper of this little vessel had on a long coat, almost like a dressing gown, made of skins with the fur inside, and with a fur cap on his head he looked quite comfortable. How infinitely more suitably these Norwegians get themselves up for an expedition like this than we do! We had only one fur coat on board, whereas all these fellows wore fur clothes of some kind, very inexpensively made of 'home cured' sealskin or reindeer skin, but most serviceable for all that.

By May 11 we had left Jan Mayen behind, and were working up past, and in the midst of a quantity of loose ice, on which we saw our first two or three seals. It is necessary to hit seals in the head if you want to kill them; it seems quite useless to try and hit them in the heart,—either their hearts are not touched by bullets, or else they have no hearts at all. With our first seal we both shot at his heart, and although we had five long shots, and by the profuse

amount of blood which was trickling over the block of ice on which he was lying, we thought that at least four of those bullets must have entered his body (in fact his heart, if he had one, must have been full of lead), yet he did not seem to care for the shots, but waddled off into the sea, from which, unless a seal is killed outright, it is impossible to recover him.

From this, I need not say, we learnt a lesson, and by aiming at their heads in future, we made sure of either killing or sparing them. The second seal that was seen on that day was sunning himself on a piece of rotten ice when the first shot killed him. It was only owing to the warm blood oozing out of his defunct corpse, together with the sea constantly washing beneath it, that broke the ice on which the body was lying, and precipitated him into that almost bottomless ocean. The third, however, we killed outright, and got his body on board the vessel. A seal is a warm-blooded animal, and the thickness of fat which envelops his rather minute body is something appalling. This seal, being a young one, had only about two inches of skin and fat all over him. We

took the body out of the skin and threw it overboard, having first extracted the liver and kidneys. The latter we had fried for breakfast next morning, and if there is anything we consider delicious in this sinful world it is young seals' kidneys. The skin was turned hair downwards on the deck, and there rubbed with salt. The blubber of these animals does not smell at all on board ship. It is cut up in long strips when it is taken off the seal, and put into casks made ready to receive it down in the hold, but it does not remain long in this condition, as it melts, and all turns into seal oil in a very few weeks' time. This oil was corked up in the barrels until we arrived at Peterhead on our return journey, and then I cannot say whether there was any smell of oil or not, as the barrels were stoppered until we left the ship.

The captain said that the seal that was killed this day was only a 'Floe' seal, which is the smallest sort one comes across up here. There are two other sorts of seals which we met on this cruise—the 'Hooded' seal and the 'Harp' seal. This Hooded seal was just in condition about the end of May and all through

June, so that to encounter him gave us the greatest pleasure in life. He was so wonderfully fat that four men could only just lift his skin and blubber. But the 'Harp' seal I would we had never seen! He was so shy that it was with infinite difficulty we ever got within shooting distance of him, and when we had finally been introduced, he was so inexplicably lean that nothing but his skin was of any value.

One question bothered us continually, and we could find no answer to it. Why were there no polar bears down here? They live on seals, not only when they are at home, but when they are visiting this part of the ice in the early spring. During the time that the female seal is bringing forth her young (she very seldom has twins), the polar bear follows her about, and then, in a spirit of rather overpowering affection, devours both her and her little pet, whenever he can get near enough to put his friendly paw on their shoulders. Considering that he lives entirely on seals, why should he not come down after his prey now, just as much as in the early part of March? I suppose it is that the blocks of ice are

farther apart this time of year, and it would necessitate a good deal of physical exertion swimming from one to the other; and moreover they now feed upon the Floe seals, which are very small, and probably, like small trout, very sweet.

CHAPTER V

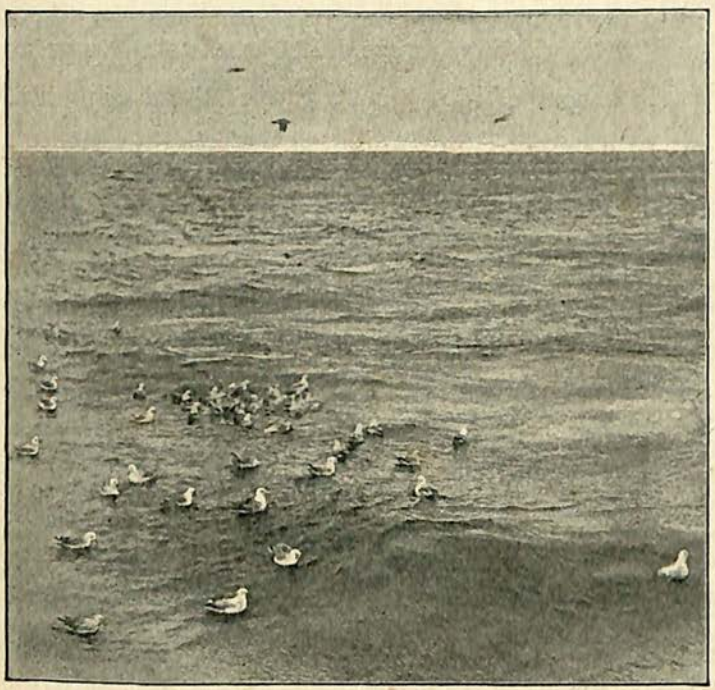
BIRDS

THE captain wanted us to have dinner at one o'clock instead of in the evening, and as he was an old whaling captain, who had always been accustomed to this manner of life we agreed to do so ; but we found it very difficult to get up anything of an appetite so soon after dinner as tea time, as this was rather a heavy meal, and came at six o'clock, and we discovered that we were, in fishing parlance, 'well on the feed' at eight o'clock breakfast, sucked down our dinner as though we meant it, but came very short at six o'clock tea. This plan had its good points, especially as, after breakfasting so early, we came up with a regular dash at our dinner. But how some folks can go through this course of dining the whole of their existence I do not understand. With us it soon

led to bad habits and maudlin conversation. After dinner Jack very often fell asleep on the sofa. The temptation was great, for during a large part of our cruise the weather was foggy and there was literally nothing to do but to gaze and gaze into an impenetrable barrier of messy mist, and of these dim days one gets more than one's ordinary share up there.

There were always five or six 'mollies,' which are a sort of northern gull, following in our wake, and picking up any refuse that was thrown overboard. In spite of the fog, we could see them balancing themselves on their silky wings, and hovering over the dark wavy sea, at first on Jack's side of the stern, then on mine; they seemed to wing their course with no apparent effort. Jack was one day evidently out of temper with the perpetual rolling of the vessel, and, after standing with his hands in his pockets, and looking at them for a long time, he said, 'Silly things, why they can't even fly straight;' then he turned and walked off. I would not have contradicted Jack at that moment for the world; he is much bigger than I am and might have smashed me to pieces for it,

but I do now assert that Mallemokes are the straightest flying birds I have ever seen ; they seem to be able to keep themselves suspended longer without moving,



MOLLIES

than any other birds, although they are all rather fat, and have not particularly long wings ; they seem to bend downwards and rise again in their course,

without an apparent flicker in their wings. I have watched them for a space sometimes of five minutes come flying on towards the ship without making any visible movement. Besides these Mallemokes there were three sorts of birds that swarmed round us the whole summer. The sailors' names for them were 'Rotges,' 'Looms,' and 'Dovekies,' but I believe their proper names are 'Little Auks,' 'Brünnich's Guillemots' and 'Black Guillemots.' When we first reached Jan Mayen we used to see quantities of these Rotges flying about, one or two hundred yards from the ship; just wheeling round and round all day and all night, and never seeming to perch or alight; their daily routine apparently aimless and monotonous. They say everything has a use, but what good a countless multitude of birds revolving round a ship, just out of shot, can do, either to themselves or to us mortals, I cannot conjecture. It must give the birds a capital appetite, and it certainly made us very hungry seeing them there; but they never seemed to stop for refreshment, but just went wheeling on without any apparent pause in their flight.

The Loom was another bird that we constantly saw passing us, flying straight and swiftly from no particular place, and hurrying on up northwards into the grey mysterious fog. They were not travelling in flocks, but three to five birds made a party and swept by in great haste, as if they were sure it would get dark before they reached their point. They fly in a swooping manner, like big swallows, and evidently do not mean to stop until they get *there*. Jack, after reading this remark in my journal, of course asked, 'Get where?' 'But, my dear fellow,' I replied, 'now can you tell us where they were going? They have got four months of perpetual daylight before them, and they may go where they please in that time for all I care. I suppose from the way they were flying that the North Pole is their destination, and I hope they will find the Scotchman and the Newcastle grindstone up there all right when they get to it.'

Then one day we saw some Dovekies near the ship. At that time we did not know quite what they were. However, they were *birds*; that we could vouch for, as we saw black and white things sitting on the

water, black all over the body, with white tips to their wings, and the captain told us they were good to eat when captured. But we did not 'loose off' any of our ten fowling-pieces at them, as we thought that the distance was too great, and also, had we slaughtered one, it was too rough to lower a boat and search for his little body.

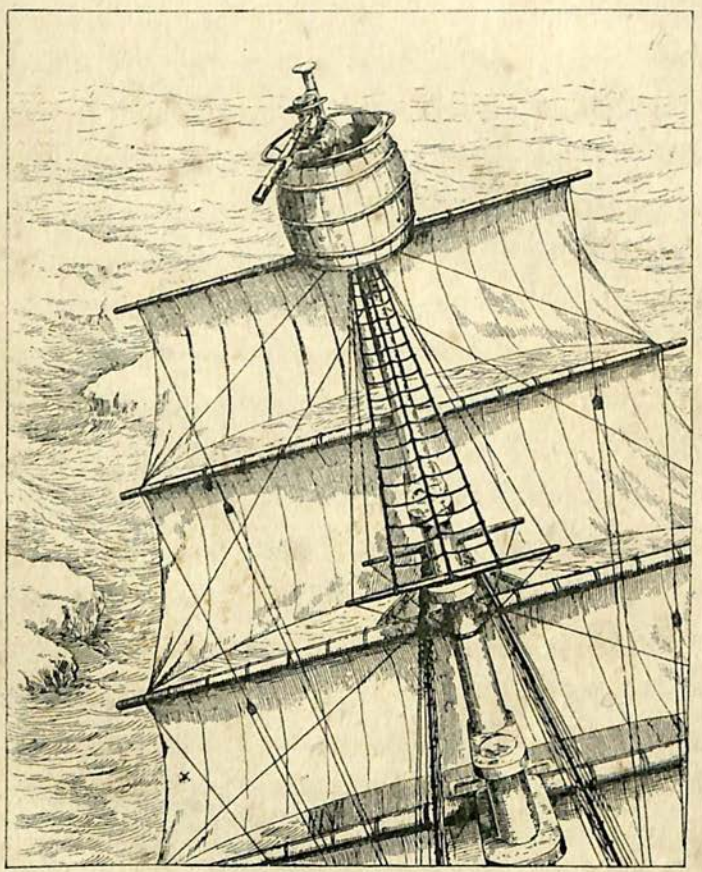
CHAPTER VI

THE CROW'S NEST

ON the foremast of the vessel, about one hundred feet up above the deck there was what they call a 'crow's nest,' which is a big wooden tub, and there were rope ladders called 'shrouds' all the way up the mast to enable one to get into it. This barrel had a round piece of wood on a hinge at its lower end, which would open upwards and inwards when you pushed your head against it, so that when you had climbed up and got inside you could kick this swinging lid down again, and it made a little bit of floor to stand on. Then inside the tub was arranged a small seat on which it was possible to sit, and watch the clouds hurrying by, first from one side and then from the other, as the vessel heaved up and down with the swell. Round the top, about a foot away, there was

an iron railing fixed, against which to steady the captain's very enormous telescope, which was kept in a canvas bag quite handy. This barrel was arranged for inspecting the ice, to see if there were any seals on it. Now this all sounds as if it were as easy and nice as possible, and you had only to step up the rope ladders, and there you were at the top ready to look out. But please remember, we were what they call aboard ship 'blooming landlubbers,' so that it took me a quarter of an hour of clambering and puffing, holding on and balancing, to climb up those five rope ladders. If there was any roll on the vessel I refused point blank to go up, as all the roll which one felt down below seemed to be increased at least forty times, by ascending that hundred feet from the deck. When you once got there, there was certainly a beautiful view of the broad miles of ice ranging in the far far distance, right away till your eye reached the horizon, and beyond the horizon you knew that there must still be hundreds of miles of ice between it and Greenland. Even then, I believe that there is no land visible on this eastern coast, for although there is high ground

rising up to eight and ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, still from the sea nothing is visible but walls of ice.



THE CROW'S NEST

There was a sort of movable screen, constructed of sailcloth, half way round the top of the 'crow's nest,' but even this was not high enough to keep the wind off our captain's head. He stands above five feet nine inches, and says the former owner of this article must have been a very little man, for he could hide himself behind its sheltering wooden sides altogether, with nothing but his beak protruding above them.

This screen is called a 'wind skeer,' and it only concealed our captain when he was sitting in his nest; but when he was standing up, his manly breast was visible, stemming that blasted cold blast, his claws were muffled in a double pair of mitts (that is, worsted gloves without fingers), and, if he got cold in his feet, 'he beat the ground with them,' reminding one of the far-famed woodcock. But he did not at the same time 'listen intently,' as our friend the woodcock is said to do, but looked intently through the huge telescope for the hidden creature he fain would find. A sailing vessel is wonderfully quiet in motion, so that we could hear every word that our captain said to us, although he was a hundred feet aloft.

On May 16 we had a north-easterly gale blowing, with the thermometer down at 27°, so that it was bitterly cold, not so much because of the five degrees of frost, as because of the driving wind. There is only one way of keeping yourself warm under the circumstances, and that is by regarding your clothes tenderly and putting on a long pair of boots which are very large, and come up to the knees, and beneath them, one pair of socks and one pair of stockings, the boots themselves having a cork sole fixed inside them. Then I wore extra flannel shirts, and a good thick coat; and for my head I had a fur cap which came down over my ears. This is one of the principal things to do—keep your ears protected; they are very liable to get frozen unless you have a proper covering for them, or else a wonderful circulation.

We had got behind the ice, out of the way of the effects of the gale upon the sea, and kept cruising up and down in a sheltered spot, so that the waves did not disturb us much—but the wind did. These icy blasts kept howling through the ship's rigging, making us think, in contradistinction to the pitiless raging of

this freezing wind, what our people were doing in the May spring of verdant fields and cowslips, while we were stormbound in this most deserted and chilly situation. Luckily the wind did not often blow in the tempestuous manner which I have described above; and only two nights before this gale I sat on deck waiting to take a photograph of the captain, but the sun would *not* go in, and I sighed for a cloud to eclipse its brilliancy. We waited above on deck till a quarter to eleven P.M., but still the sun shone on, and looked as if it meant to go on shining all night, so eventually, as our captain wanted to turn in, I had to give it up. I may mention that that same sun has no warmth in its rays, absolutely none; you might as well think of catching a flamingo as catching a sunstroke up in these arctic regions.

CHAPTER VII

NORWEGIAN SHIPS

ON May 19 we came across two large Norwegian sailing vessels, one of which we boarded after a row of twenty minutes, just as she was coming out of the ice, where she had been to get nearer some 'saddle-back' seals, which we had also seen, but as they were about two miles off, over some very thick ice, we could not approach near enough to do them harm. The ship which we boarded was the 'Jason' of Sandefjord, an auxiliary screw barque of about 500 tons. The captain of this vessel was very civil to us; he took us up into a regular little bare Norwegian saloon, with a huge Norwegian stove zigzagging up in one corner of it. In his saloon he had a large box, on which we sat; this was full of bottles containing every sort of liquor that the poor throat of man can possibly swallow.

There was also one chair in this saloon on which the captain sat himself, and the barest of thin tables; this was all.

Yet household furniture goes for little up here, and the 'Jason' had been much the most successful sealer that had gone out from England or Norway this year, for she had aboard the skins and blubber of five thousand one hundred seals, mostly very young ones, which they had annexed early in the year when they were scarcely old enough to waddle. It seems unsportsmanlike to kill them when they are as young as this, but still I believe their skins are particularly valuable then, as they can only make what we are familiar with as best sealskin out of the hides of the young seals. They had on board nine boats and *sixty* men to row them.

We thought that we should not understand this captain's English at first, but when he said 'What will you take?' we caught the drift of his conversation and knew he was trying to be civil, so replied, 'Thank you, we should like some Norwegian öl, and as the weather has been so inclement and cold, perhaps a taste of

aquavit would not come amiss afterwards.' Then, as we had done all that we could with this foreigner we shook hands most warmly and retired. The 'Jason' was now on her way to Iceland under an engagement to carry up to Greenland (the eastern side) Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer—a man who this summer went right across Greenland, and performed a feat which has never been done before. He will very shortly publish an account of his adventures.

As I said before, there were two Norwegian boats, but what the name of the other barque was, Jack could not remember. He seemed to recollect that it was some regal name, but when I suggested 'Courtship,' he pooh-poohed me, saying that he was sure it was the Kong—something or other.

Well, as we could not get at that name after hunting all through our memories for it, we gave it up. Yes, it was no use giving way to invectives, or cursing the day that introduced us to this wicked world with such poor intellects, for that ship's name had passed from our retaining organs for ever; and

was blotted out from us till eternity : and when I came to think over it in privacy, I was not certain, if any of us had known that name, where the satisfaction would have come in. Should we have led any more peaceful lives, or should we die any happier for knowing it? 'Decidedly no.' The end of that worry was that we could not tell what the blasted Norwegian barque was called, and we did not want to know.

From the crow's nest, we could see the seals lying out on the ice, basking beneath the cloudy sky, with a particularly cold easterly wind fanning their heated brows, while the thermometer registered four degrees of frost. However, *they* thought this the height of summer enjoyment. We, however, were careful not to give our opinion above a whisper, as they might have taken offence, and left the balmy midwinter air to plunge again into the sea, which hereabouts is of a very much lower temperature than the icy blocks on which they lie. We could not, however, attack these seals, as they were 'far inice' (I suppose that this ought to be made one word, just as you say 'inland').

This enormous plateau of ice did not look so conspicuous at a distance as I should have thought that it ought to, as it was nearly always covered with a certain amount of fog, the reason being that the ice is always colder than the air, so that when the wind altered for a few hours to the south, it was nearly sure to bring fog with it. Fortunately this thick mist, although it was bitterly cold, did not stick to one, and come off on everything that you touched as it would do in London; an arctic fog is much cleaner, and in every way preferable to its London relative.

We were now surrounded by blocks of ice from two to sixty feet square. I only say 'square' because I wish to give an idea of their size. Of course they are really all sorts of queer shapes, now towering up six feet into the air with three pinnacles upon a slab down level with the sea, joined together across the top by a small flat piece of beautifully transparent greeny blue ice; now almost flat against the sea, some of them lifting up one mushroom-like arm or head. And when the sun was shining

you cannot think what a beautiful blue and green it made against the darker cerulean blue of the waters, with here and there pieces so thick that they appeared almost white. The sea was of course quite clear and transparent up here away from the land.

Every now and again the captain from his watch-tower would see a seal; then the ship was put towards the block of ice on which it lay. Presently the boat was lowered, and we, armed to the teeth, would go aboard, with two men to row us and one to steer. I take for an example one poor little seal which was lying on his back scratching his tummy quite contentedly when we approached him. We advanced thus, armed all over with double-barrelled express rifles and our pockets full of cartridges, bent on destroying the innocent dreams of his childhood, bent on cutting off his happy young life; and we did cut it off you may bet. The magnificent solitude of the ocean only echoed with one loud ringing shot. There was just a splash in the still icy main, as a morsel of the bullet escaped on the other side of his head, and our young friend woke up to find a nasty piece of express lead

in his head, all expanding, so that he did not know where he was, where he was going, or what he was doing. His unfortunate corpse was soon overboard, being devoured by Mollies, while his fat little skin was on our deck.

NO SEALS YET

JACK shot a seal from the ship's deck one day, but the beast did not move or care. He was naturally annoyed at its regardless mien, so poured in shots till nearly every cartridge in the ship had been expended (at least, this is what all the men declared), but as there were nearly seven thousand charges on board for our seven rifles, the number must have been exaggerated. Eventually he discovered it was a bit of black ice which he had been exploding at. He expostulated with himself at first internally, then came down to his cabin and exploded infernally, saying that he did not like to let off anything but his rifle before the sailors, but now he retired to his cabin to let himself off, where I guess he cussed it out, together with a huge half-gallon tin of gun-oil, with

which he was wont to solace himself and his rifle when anything went wrong aboard.

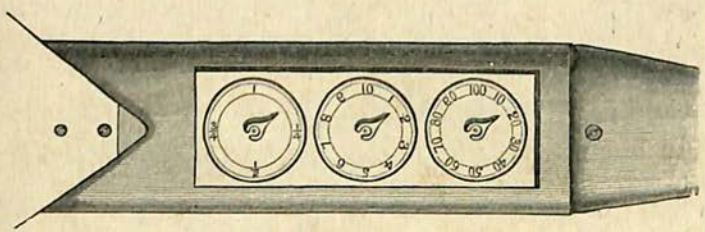
He also made and painted up the most beautiful draught-board that it was likely we poor mortals could devise, and with it sixty-four bullets flattened out, painted red on one side and white on the other, making capital counters. With these we played 'Reversi' all through these long summer evenings, while the captain and Jack indulged constantly in the game of draughts, which I truly could not play with any success, because I was not clever enough to zigzag round and round that board with my three kings against Jack's three crowned heads, and my brain became so hopelessly intermingled with white squares and black ones that I always 'got whopped,' and had to give in. Besides, unfortunately we began to play on this board too hurriedly after it had been finally painted over, and as the paint was not dry, some of the black squares became patchy with white and red, and the red draughtsmen became white. Altogether the combination was too difficult to unravel, and we finally got mixed up to such an extent as to

who was playing with white and who with red, the whole affair waxing so heterogeneous and indefinable, that we had to give it up rather than come to blows about the bothering board.

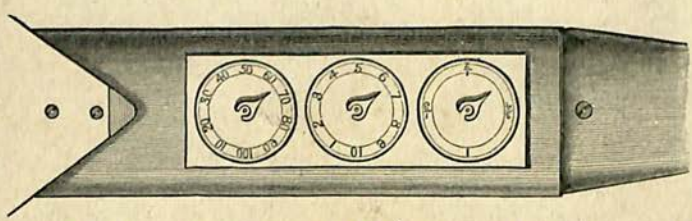
You see we had one goal at which to aim and one object to live for during our voyage, which was to paint up those men, and in every way to beautify the board as much as possible. It did not really make much difference whether we played on it or not, so long as it was made magnificently beautiful, as this was, at that time, the only really important undertaking we had on hand, and nothing else came anywhere near this soul-stirring reality. 'But,' as Jack said, 'never mind, for there is a great time coming.'

Jack, moreover, set himself to work cleaning up a patent harpoon log of the captain's. When he had taken it to pieces it proved to be so full of most minute cogwheels that it was impossible for any amateur to put it together again correctly. This is the sort of way that he, with the greatest difficulty, reconstructed it, which to the captain looked all right, but when we got back to sea, out of these floating

patches of ice, he put his patent log in our wake, and jolly well woke up to the following facts. When we had gone, according to that log, let us say 66¾ miles, we had really traversed only eleven miles and about three furlongs, for reasons of which I did



LOG-DIAL, AS IT OUGHT TO BE



LOG-DIAL, ACCORDING TO JACK'S RECONSTRUCTION

not know the depth, no more did Jack. We had got the whole thing topsy-turvy, and had become so hopelessly involved with speculation about how those wheels ought to be, that our minds seemed in an interwoven condition of chaos, cogwheels, and gun-oil.

Jack, when he went to bed, thanked Heaven that his berth was half closed in with planks, otherwise he would have proved exactly how far it was to the floor of his cabin from his bunk.

In the fore part of our poop-deck was a sort of roomy, deep cabin, without light in it, and this was surrounded with a kind of richly painted wall of wood, and covered over with the same material. It was called by the captain 'the store-room,' and it was possible to descend into this cabin by a ladder from an opening on deck: it contained every kind of store the revolving mind of man can conjure up, either dangling from its ceiling, or heaped on one side; perhaps in one of the various cupboards which it contained, or lying high up on one of its deep shelves. If you asked the captain for any kind of article, he was sure to go to this store-room, and having fumbled about in the partial darkness which existed down below for about a quarter of an hour, he came to the surface, bearing in his hands either a lot of sand-paper or a ham, paints of every sort and colour, or tarpaulin hats, coats, and a kind of loose trousers, linseed-oil, rat-traps,

sailors' gloves, jam, and rope ; everything in fact that you could think of, was in that store-room, and infinitely more besides. Jack displayed a passionate maternal regard for certain birds which we had shot, and which were amongst other trifles hanging down there ; betraying for their welfare the utmost extent of human anxiety. I feel sure, from watching his apparent solicitude for their future, that if a shipwreck had come to us, he would have wished to save their precious breasts and his gun-oil from destruction, or that he might perish in trying to work out this deed of virtue.

During the first week of May we instituted a bath, as when we first came aboard the captain had only provided us with a large foot-tub. However, one day when Jack was on deck he saw down in the aft opening of the hold a great big wooden half tub, which struck him as being the very identical thing we wanted for a washing bath, so we commanded the steward to have it scrubbed out and taken aft to our cabins. When this was done we learned that it was a half barrel kept for salting down sealskins, and that

they had nothing else that would do in its place. So I said, let all the sealskins in future be salted on deck, and Jack added 'for there is a great time coming.' And they were salted on deck: so that every other morning, for the rest of our voyage, we had the luxury of a good bath, which even in this northern climate could be made warm and enjoyable with a little hot water we prevailed on the steward to bring us.

On May 26 we experienced half a gale from the north-east, the thermometer registering ten degrees below freezing. With a young hurricane blowing, it was exceedingly cold, added to which on this occasion we got no protection from the ice, and were regularly caught in it, so that the ship pitched about most horribly. In consequence we could not take any exercise on deck, so that for a day and a half there was nothing to be done but shiver round the stove down in the cabin, holding on to the backs of our seats all the time.

The ship was so unsteady that our captain did not attempt the crow's nest, as he could not have held the telescope in his hand if he had got up there,

and even down below she tossed about in a most disheartening way, so that, as Jack said, 'life seemed as hard a thing to bear as it were possible to make;' he felt that the whole world was just a heaving mass of watery nothingness, and that we who lived on it were only chilly mites of beings wafted about wherever the wind and sea chose to take us.

It went very hard with some small birds, wheatears we believed, although they were clad in much lighter feather than the ordinary wheatear of our British home. Two of these little birds were blown on board the ship, where one of them curled up and died immediately, while the other hopped about for a bit, and then withered away. I think that they died of the cold and not of starvation, as we offered them plenty to eat on their arrival, but they would not look at it. Perhaps they had never seen bread before, but I thought that the little fowl were deceasing merely from the chills. We wondered what these birds lived on generally. The captain says that they live on the ice; they certainly do not seem to be able to live off it, as two of these birds had died off it.

CHAPTER IX

SEALS

FINDING that there were no seals on the ice up to the north, we thought that it might be better to try southwards, and see if we could find them there. All one day therefore was devoted to sailing through a great bight, or narrow bay sort of formation, between two arms of ice, and on either side we were hedged in by fields and white jagged rocks of ice. The wind was still blowing from the north-east, with the thermometer eight degrees below freezing, though the sea had gone down almost to a dead calm in there, as we had now left the ocean about fifty miles behind. We soon came to the end of this bight, so that we could either tack right back out of it, or charge through the barrier, which was about seventeen or eighteen miles broad, and so reach the open sea again. The captain

thought that this latter would be the best plan, and that it would be possible, by steering first to one side, then to the other, to get clean through it. We therefore started away, and were going all through that night and the next day.

It was one of those sunny brilliant nights when the distant heights of Jan Mayen's island looked as clear as though there were not sixty miles of sea intervening between us and them ; when the ice at our feet looked so bluey white and so spotless against the dark, dark cerulean ocean, as in smoky England we can have no conception of. We went tacking up and down this channel, not because we could not get on, but because we did not want to go ahead very fast. The cause of our delay was not, as might be imagined, to watch the sun on the crystal-white, snow-covered ice which hedged us in in patches all round, nor to see the spotless white 'snow-birds' which followed in the wake of the ship, nor to watch the little waves curling over the Arctic Sea on the blue, perfectly clear ocean ; but to kill seals, and to cut them up. By six o'clock on the following day we had been on the hunt for

nearly twenty-four hours, and we had heaped up on deck twenty-one sealskins, covered all over with fat and blubber to the depth of three inches and an eighth. Seal shooting is a pretty sport, for it is necessary to advance on the 'bladdernoses' (as the Hooded seals are called by the sailors) with the utmost caution when they are taking their ease in the sun. It does not do to stalk them, however, as supposing they do not see you coming and the boat suddenly appears round a corner, unless your position is then within shooting distance and you manage to kill one straight off, they will be sure all to take to the sea. A sure shot has to be a very close one, as it is exceedingly difficult to shoot out of a boat heaving up and down on the waves; your only chance is to draw near them as silently as possible, quite straight up wind. It is true that some Norwegians shout at the top of their voices when approaching the seals; this is intended to scare the animals; sometimes it answers this purpose, so that they are too frightened to move, but as a rule I think that it is best to keep quiet.

Dead seals do not generally float, except when

they are excessively fat, and die immediately on touching the water; so that it is necessary to shoot them when they are well on the ice, and not when they are just scrambling to the edge. On this occasion we came across two lots of three seals on one bit of floating ice. The first time we managed to kill all three, but on the second occasion we did not even fire a shot, as one of the three took to the water; upon which the two remaining ones woke up, looked at each other, and coming to the conclusion that something was wrong, followed his example.

A seal must be wonderfully full of blood, which is unusually compressed, as it will rise up from a bullet hole in the body three feet high in one continuous fountain for thirty seconds after it has been shot. Each of these full-grown Hooded seals we should think weighed from one and a half, to two hundredweight, so that it was impossible to lift them out of the sea into a rowing boat. In cases, therefore, when the seal had fallen into the water, and was fat enough to float when dead, there were only two things to be done, either to haul its inanimate body on to the ice: or to tow it

CUTTING THE BLUBBER OFF SEALSKINS.

behind the boat, attached thereto with a boathook till it was alongside the ship; but this cannot be done for more than a quarter of a mile, as two hundredweight hooked on to the end of a stick, out behind the boat, is more than we could pull through the water for any lengthened period. When we had towed it thus to the vessel, a rope over a double block was let down, with an iron hook on the end of the rope, which being inserted into its flesh, five sailors, apparently with the greatest exertion, hauled the body aboard. Then a big butcher's knife, sharpened on a steel till it became exceedingly acute, was used for skinning the seal and getting it outside its blubber; the body was thrown overboard, where about fifty Mollemokes were waiting, who immediately pounced down to get what they could of the flesh. It is quite pretty to see a young seal playing by itself, turning over, and rolling on its luxuriant white bed. We felt that it so vastly enjoyed itself, and so thoroughly entered into the spirit of its lonely gambols, that it seemed quite a pity to spoil its fun; but we must either spoil *its* sport or ruin our own, and as we had not

coursed over these many miles from our English home for nothing, it seemed better on the whole to put it suddenly out of its happiness, and let it find out at once whether there was a next world for our seals as well as for our souls. It was all done in a moment, just one quick sharp shot, and then our men were on the ice cutting the skin and blubber off the poor little body, which they left there a prey to the snowbirds (Ivory gulls), who were standing round on the tops of the little ice peaks, as still and immovable as statues apparently; nothing more than a slender white bird, with dark legs and motionless pink eyes; they remained as still as ghosts, till we had taken a couple of strokes away in our boat, when they and the Mollies might be seen descending with a swoop and pecking away or hovering round the warm flesh, in such mazy multitudes that one was sure very little of it would be left before the bright day had worn to a close. (This is merely an anachronism, or as Jack would say, 'poetical humbug,' as this day did not close hereabouts for four months.)

It is a strange thing to see a seal propelling itself

in the water: its front feet (or hands, or fins, whichever it is right to call these two sort of five-fingered paddles) are useless, as it simply swims with its hind five-toed feet, and swims with them as though they were a tail, putting them both together behind it, thus hiding its apparently useless little tail, and propelling itself, by wagging them, and the end of its body, backwards and forwards. I should think that it was owing to its having absolutely no obstruction in the way, nothing but a perfectly smooth sealskin body, that causes it to swim such a pace as it seems to be able to proceed.

The next day all hands were put on cutting the blubber off the seals that we had shot. They had a long board tilted up on two three-legged 'frenching stools,' behind which two or four sailors stood with an iron hook in one hand, a knife in the other, and a steel at their belt. These hooks are for shifting the sealskins; as they are so very slippery, it is impossible to lift them with the hands. They cut off the blubber into strips about two feet long and three inches broad, which a man before them keeps putting

into casks in the hold. The skins are shifted with hooks across the board, as they are much too greasy and heavy to do anything with, if only the hands are used. They are so exceedingly blubbery and heavy, with all their fat on, that it takes six men to lift one of them. Having got the skin across the board, they divide the blubber right along the top of the plank without letting the knife cut through the skin. This cut is called a 'score,' and it keeps the skin in its place, preventing it from slipping either backwards or forwards. The 'frenching' made the main deck so slippery that it was impossible to walk, although the ship was quite steady, as it was just grease all over.

CHAPTER X

SEAL SHOOTING

ON May 30 we essayed to have our hair cut, but none of the sailors aboard were cognisant of the first rudiments of tonsuring, so that there was no one to perform the function. When we had sent forth the edict that some one must come and cut our hair, we sat in shivering silence, for we feared what the outcome of such a direful proclamation would be. I was half afraid that the young carpenter (who was called 'Shavings') would presently appear, with his chisel or plane, to do this deed, or that he would grapple us with his pair of pincers and a jagged pocket-knife; but it was not so. We knew by a sort of instinctive dread that something fearful was going to happen, and so it did: for it was our most abandoned steward who attempted the operation. First Jack sat down and had his hair

torn off by this ruthless barber. Torn off, did I say? no, it was cut off, but the sensation to him at the time was more like wrenching. He suffered so much secret anguish, that he did not know if his hair had been cut off or pulled out. At the end there were the whole of Jack's beautiful auburn locks on the floor, and precious few on his head: what there were, were left on in great high uneven patches with white skin showing in between. Two teeth were out of his best comb, and my pet scissors, through coming into contact with the comb too frequently, were blunted irrevocably. I asked Jack, before submitting myself to the same direful hand, 'how he liked it,' and he said, 'Oh' (blinking) 'it wasn't so very painful—at least if you could keep the beggar from sticking the scissors into your head, it would not be.' Then I went under the same tortures, not willingly (after watching the efforts to appear calm depicted on Jack's face) but of necessity; so that at dinner that day, the state of both our heads provoked a smile from our captain, for even he could not look on our skin, all white and red from the digs of the comb, without

giving way to an uneasy twitching of the upper lip. When the carpenter came down that afternoon to do something to the mast which runs through the cabin, he simply looked at us but did not change a muscle of his countenance. Ah! this was a brave young carpenter. When, however, he got outside, a suppressed giggle came from the deck, wafted to us down the companion. We knew what was the matter with the young man.

If you do not know what a natural liar is, I will do my best to inform you. One day I got up for eight o'clock breakfast as usual, for which we were generally very punctual. When I was dressed, seeing that Jack had not even been called, I shouted at the steward and asked him, 'for why'? He looked at me quite naturally and replied that breakfast would not be till half-past eight this morning, as we had been up till two the night before. However, at nine minutes past eight he brought along our porridge and coffee, all hot. Upon which I wanted to wither him with a blight of bad language, but Jack, who was now rising, said, 'I would not do so, because you ought

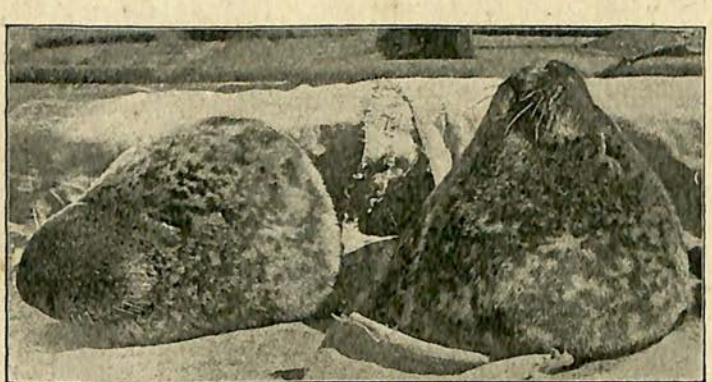
to know by this time that he is a "natural liar," and in this particular he differs from the ordinary liar. It is his nature to seem deceptive and bad in every way; he not only seems it, but *is* about as low-minded a rascal as ever I came across. I have thought a good many uncomplimentary things about him, but, thank Heaven, I have been delivered from putting them into words as yet.'

On June 1 we were out sealing nearly all the day, and came back to the ship finally at a quarter to twelve at night, having annexed twenty-five seals. On the next day we killed fifty-nine, and the day after thirty-five. I was amused with the deportment of a certain Hooded seal. He was a great big fellow, and I had only managed to hit him in the side, about where his heart ought to be. I saw his eyes, as he lay on a heap of snowy ice, twinkling with rather a knowing look, as a tall red-bearded sailor man whom they call 'Georgy,' got upon the ice to flinch (skin) him. Georgy went up to give him his *coup de grâce* with a kind of spiked boathook that they use on purpose, which is called a club. But our bladdernose turned

round and chased the unfortunate Georgy all over that block of ice, snarling and showing the most pugnacious set of teeth, till he stopped for a moment, and laid his head to rest on the ice, when I succeeded in settling him with another shot.

About this time we had one or two longish days' seal shooting. On the morning of June 5, for instance, when we had been in bed only about four hours, the captain came and woke us up, saying that a little Norwegian sailing ship, called the 'Haabet,' which has been in the habit of stopping near the same place as we have for the last week, and shooting over the same promontories of ice, had loomed in sight. Therefore he recommended us to start out shooting at once, as we had just sailed in front of a new piece of ice, where he could discern a quantity of Hooded seals with his long telescope, from the crow's nest," and doubtless these Norwegians had seen them also. We therefore turned out of our bunks, and in about ten minutes had put on our clothes, drunk a cup of coffee each, prepared our cartridge bags and rifles; put our field-glasses, a small tub of partially clean water, and some

captain biscuits aboard the two whaleboats, before the 'Haabet' had even found out that we were going to leave our ship at all in this way at midnight. Then we set out, with Jack in the bows of one boat, four men rowing and one man steering, and myself in the other with a like complement of men.



SEALS' HEADS

First we had seven hours' hard rowing amongst the ice, which was hereabouts in huge blocks, about two hundred yards each way, getting back to the ship about 11 o'clock A.M., when we made a huge breakfast, after the exertion of rowing after the seals and shooting them was over. We had brought back in

THREE OF OUR CREW.

each boat thirty-two sealskins, and in consequence the boats were weighed down to their gunwales, so that there was not literally any room for more. Had there been any sea on we could not have got them aboard; as it was, the men were all sitting with their feet as high as their waists, and their legs on the fat skins, and a very difficult affair it must have been to row those boats some two or three miles that it was necessary to get to the ship. Rowing is not altogether convenient in a sea, sitting without a stretcher or anything to put your feet against, and having nothing beneath you but particularly oily skins. It was eleven o'clock in the day before we had breakfast, as all those skins had to be taken aboard the ship one at a time, with five men pulling on deck at one end of the block or pulley and three down in the boat below, putting the skins on the 'tackle.'

Then we had a rest of about six hours, and at five thirty started out again. On this afternoon trip I took with me an American Bullard rifle, but the sight got broken almost as soon as we started, so that the weapon was spoiled; and I should not recommend

this rifle for seal shooting, as the sights are much too flimsy for rough work in a boat. We always, however, carried two rifles with us, so that I used one of the captain's, which was a single-barrelled Henry, and a remarkably strong, well-sighted, useful weapon it proved. With it I had the fortune to kill nine seals on one piece of ice with ten shots.

When we had killed thirty-four seals, we returned again with their skins, but again were not able to proceed above a walk all the way. We got aboard the ship at just twelve o'clock, midnight, and finally to bed at half-past one, having been up and doing since four o'clock the morning before. We had slain and brought aboard 130 sealskins, which was pretty good for two small boats like ours. When I say 'small,' our boats were not particularly small ones, and we should think that, when 'Lamont' speaks casually of bringing home fifty sealskins in his boat, it must have been a wonderfully roomy tub, or filled with remarkably small skins. The next morning we were up early, and on the look out for more seals, but they had been scared by the number of corpses around, and had

made off, so that nothing was left but the cold, cold ice, with some newly frozen 'crangs' upon it.

It was curious that this was a Tuesday, the fifth of June, as our luck generally came on Saturday, but 'bless me, you can never tell' (as Mrs. Brown says), which day of the week your luck will come. According to the old story books these sort of things used to be managed quite differently to what they are now, and by referring to some old man aboard ship, you could tell to a nicety when you would see the glistening seal disporting itself with the female seal upon the lustrous ice.

Nowadays, that is all altered, as our only old man was one Bill Berry, who was a terrible grumbling old Scotchman; at least it is not fair to say 'he was one who murmured,' as his language was as untranslatable as the Kamtschatdales' would be, so that we did not really know whether the old boy was complaining to the other men in our boat, when he indulged in a little conversation (which I regret to say was not of infrequent occurrence), or if he was merely lamenting about the weather, or if he was blessing us in rather a

loud tone, or cursing the mate of this vessel. All we knew was, that his facile tongue, when once set in motion, moved like the clapper of a bell, and we could not understand his broad Scotch. This old man was not so handy at getting on to the ice for skinning seals as he used to be forty-five years ago (he could not have been more than thirty-five years of age in those days). Now, however, he was never persuaded to leave the boat except when the ice against which we touched was a very little above the water, so that he had not to step up far, and then our stroke oar levered himself out with the greatest solicitude. Getting in again one day, he fell on to a quantity of sealskins which were piled up there, so that his tumble could not have been a very painful one, but he talked about it (or something else) and complained for quite an hour afterwards: at least we thought he was speaking of his fall, but were not certain. However, we cannot but look up to Bill with some veneration, as it was unwarrantably plucky of him to come up to the cold regions, added to which we thought that we ought to have pity on him as he was a man with 'a lonely arm,' being partially paralysed in one of

these members, so that he could not lift it at all. Unless he was drunk when he started, or did not know where the ship was bound for, we cannot make out why he came at all. This used-up dotard was particularly happy at making brooms out of old ropes, which were used for sweeping the main deck, but beyond this he was not up to much, for he was such an ancient mariner that one would think he would hardly have strength enough to drag one wearied foot after another to the grave.

CHAPTER XI

ON DECK

ON a day which was comparatively quiet, and when the men were hard at work peeling the blubber off the skins which were heaped neatly up on our main deck, and between whiles attending to the sailing of the vessel, Jack came down to the cabin and said, 'They are piling up those skins by the——' Here he stopped short, as it was rather a cold morning, and the stove had apparently gone out, so that he was too much engrossed with the fire to continue his sentence. I was very much puzzled as to what these suppressed words could be; was he simply going to say 'by the bye,' or was he going to indulge in some scandalous epithet, and say 'by the Lord Harry,' or 'by the Holy Poker'? Evidently this was not his intention, as presently he continued, 'by the bell on deck.'

The only part of our deck which was promenadable was the poop, and this indeed was greasy in places where we had come up in oily boots. But

THE AFTER-DINNER PIPE

the main deck was so slippery that one could not venture on it at all without displaying great agility. Jack was coming up from the hold, where he had been to see them stowing away the blubber in casks, and

tucking long greasy pieces of fat into the barrels. When he emerged from this place of concealment, there was a great thud on the deck, and he came down all amongst the oil and mess. There were about seven sailors witnesses of this catastrophe, and Jack said that that beast of a 'Walrus' (whose photograph I have taken standing on the left) asked in a loud voice, with a great guffaw, 'how many had fallen,' while some of the more civilised turned away to hide a smiling countenance.

In polite life, when we have a disagreeable fall our friends are too urbane to show any signs of amusement or mirth. But these sailors, through their natural simplicity and ignorance of the customs of society, have no hesitation in displaying their entertainment. From this predicament Jack got up covered all over with slime, and smiled pleasantly, though somewhat inanely, to show that he was not hurt, but rather appreciated the joke. Then he came away aft to me, whom he made a silent witness of all his trouble. Not only was he horribly bruised—for a man standing six foot two, and weighing fourteen

stone, does not fall lightly—but saturated all over with blood and blubber of seals. Even to the end of our voyage, a seat which was before the stove remained covered over with a glutinous substance which his trousers had absorbed. I patched him up as well as I could, but his heart was bruised for some time, and his trousers never recovered.

The main deck was slippery more or less every time that we had seals aboard, and when the men had a day's work to do cutting the blubber off the skins, it became gradually more and more greasy, till at last it was impossible for the sailors at work to walk a step, as the whole ground on which they trod was so oily that I saw two sailors floored in one morning. When we had about three hundred skins aboard, the main deck became so absolutely unwalkable from the slime with which all its floors were covered, that it was almost impossible to do anything but 'snail' along it. As soon, however, as the operation was finished they threw down and sprinkled the whole deck with either salt or sand, which made it promenadable till it could be washed, which of course

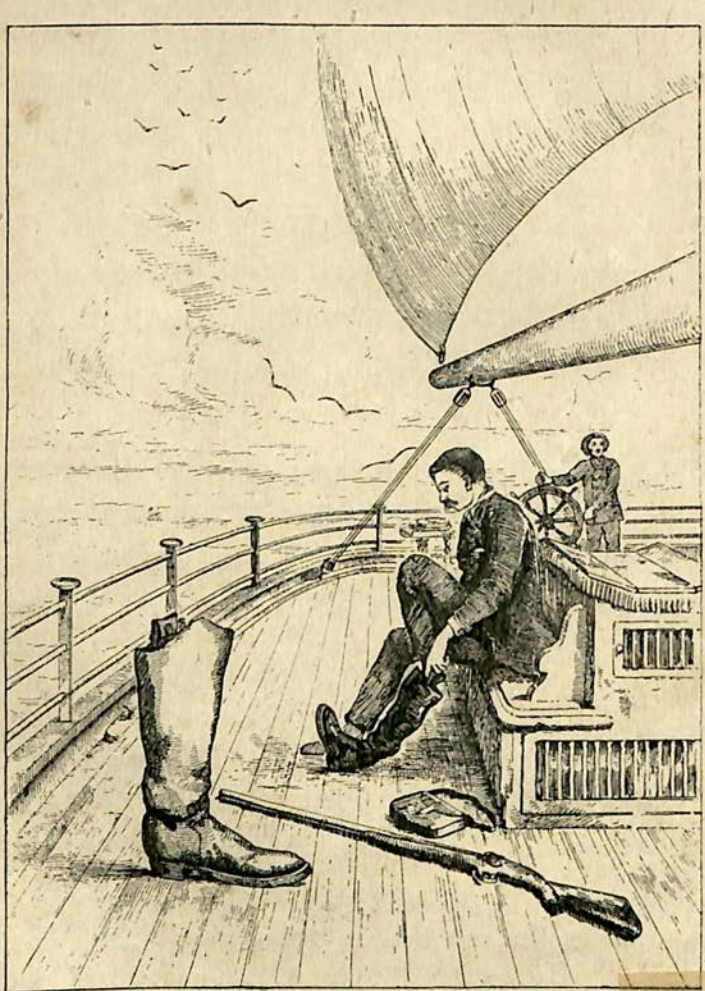
cannot be done with water pure, but this sand is a wonderful cleanser.

We had great fears about our soup, which had to come all along this seal's-fatty deck from the galley fire to the after cabin, but in the steward's hands it came with the utmost exactness, precisely at one o'clock, I dare not add of the solar day, as the cabin clock, which we went by, had waited three parts of an hour, while the captain's chronometer had ticked its way fearlessly forward with the sun till there was nearly an hour's difference between them, so that the steward had to be deceived, together with the crew, by this cabin delusion. Our soup was placed on the table in great sort of porridge bowls instead of soup-plates. Ah! 'twas delicious steamy seafaring soup, so hot that we had often to wait what seemed long hours for it to cool, and then it went down with an appetite such as we never have on shore. There was something delicious in the oniony compound, this thick, steamy mixture of meat, potatoes, and hard peas, all boiled together till it became a broth worthy of a king, which we ladled down with huge spoons in silence, too much absorbed

TWO HONEST TARS.

in our eating to have time for anything but thought, which we were too hungry to give vent to. This steward was without doubt the worst hand at anything I ever saw in my life. He was just about fit for a wreck, I should say. Our soup being much too hot to gulp down one day, I said to him, 'Steward, there is, I declare, caloric in this soup.' 'That I'm sure there ain't,' he replied; then thinking, and scratching his bald pate, he added, 'at least I never put none there.'

The Walrus aforesaid had a pal of about his own standing in life—I mean the other gentleman in the picture. The day we made this interesting study was one in a thousand, as he had quite a long pipe, but generally the clay which he fixed in his mouth was merely a bowl without any stem at all. I inquired if he did not burn his tongue with such short pipes, and he replied, 'No, we don't burn our tongues, but sometimes we sort of scalds our cheeks with 'em,' which I think was quite possible, as a bowl without a stem is likely to cause some annoyance of this sort, and the sailors have the tips of their noses actually blackened with these short pipes.



PULLING ON SEA BOOTS

The sailors all wore a sort of long hand protector called mitts; they had on two pairs of these, one over the other. They are about sixteen inches long, and come up on to the Jersey sleeves, extending down to about three inches beneath the fingers, to keep the wind from freezing their hands. When it was blowing half a hurricane and freezing eight or ten degrees, then they were necessary; but there was no need for such things when the wind came from the south and the thermometer registered thirty-three. However, they always wore them in spite of the warmth of temperature. Jack had laid in about six pairs of enormous woollen gloves, with which he always covered his hands, but nothing would prevail on him to wear even the most ordinary great-coat: in which case he differed from me most pointedly, as I not only wore the great-coat of commerce, with chamois-leather pockets, in which my hands were always placed, but I was garnished as to the legs with the boots which have been spoken of before, so that my *tout ensemble* was quite arctic.

CHAPTER XII

TEN DAYS' FOG

FROM June 9 to the 19th was a time of dismal, desolate fog, with nothing but sea all round us, from which it seemed impossible to gather the least encouragement, as a chill haze obliterated our survey even of the marine expanse, which we will not say gladdened our eyes before, as there was too much sameness about a view of perpetual waves to please anyone, but to say that it refreshed our eyes is not saying too much. Fortunately we had laid in a great stock of books, more in fact than we *thought* we could ever consume, which lent a certain enchantment to our languishing career. Besides, Jack said 'there is a great time coming,' and I believed him.

All one day during this fog I was constructing a new sight for my rifle. The thing was done in this

way. I searched in three boxes that the captain had on the mantelpiece in his room. These old cigar-boxes contained an innumerable multitude of useless articles, such as old hinges, keys, spectacles, bits of cork, human teeth, and the like, so that if you wanted any kind of thing, the best way to find a substitute for it was to go to the captain's cabin and there make search. For even if you should happen to want what was not there, you could have the satisfaction of making the most awful mess that it would be agreeable to imagine, by turning out the contents of those interesting coffers, when having strewn them all over the table you suddenly remembered that there was something else it was necessary to do, and left them all out there.

Oh! that *was* glorious.

Out of one of these boxes I got the brass loop-hole for a hook, and from this I constructed the most brilliant brazen sight that mortal eye is likely to conceive or light on. This I fixed on the before-mentioned rifle, and made a wooden covering for it which fitted most truly, so that I might not lose this

sight also. When I had finished working at it, Jack came up, and examining it said, 'And what is there beneath this huge bit of wood? Hah! I see there is a piece of gold in sight.' To which I replied, 'A golden sight be blowed, it's nothing but amalgam.'

When we were waiting off the ice reef for the fog to lift a strange sound was borne to us issuing from the distant haze; from out that bitter cold fog there rang a heartrending yell, not exactly like the braying of an ass, nor like the shrill cry of a thrashing engine shrieking forth its hideous Godforsaken whistle from the adjacent hill top. It was not like the pigs of 'Golden City' must have been when they consumed a quantity of dynamite and then gave forth to the world their concealed misery. It seems to have been (according to Jack) a wild and fearful yell; more like, we should think, the cry of a fierce lion of the African desert, if he should happen to get his tail between the irons which formed the top of our stove in the 'Traveller' and could not release it. For a hideous and forlorn cry was blown to us through the density which surrounded the ship on every side. We

were told by our shipmates that it was a seal, and as this was the only animal within a radius of two hundred miles, I believed it to be a correct statement. Perhaps this seal had toothache. That they can have toothache is almost proved by a seal's head which Jack preserved, which had five or six bad teeth in it.

We had been in this perpetual condition of distressing thickness for about seven days when one morning, looking for the sky, I said, 'Ah, captain, but you can see light up above you.' He replied, 'Yes, but we don't want to get there at present.' 'Oh,' I said. Then there was a pause: 'I thought you said you wanted to get to the ceiling as soon as possible.' 'True, but we don't want Harp seals just now, as they are out of condition.' And here this intellectual conversation was dropped.

How still the ocean was, with nothing but mist all round, just the captain's footsteps as he paced the deck to and fro, up and down, and the chortle of the Mollies, always following in our wake. Not flying, but, now that it was so calm, just swimming after the receding ship, which glided slowly on her course

over the deep blue sea. The Mollies were constantly on the look out for scraps which were thrown overboard, and when anything tempting went out of the ship, such as a tough old bit of sealskin, one saw about twenty-five of these dear birds fighting for who should get most of it, bickering and fluttering on till they got right out of sight, and were lost in the mist that prevailed. These birds differed from Jack and myself. We, like the Mollies, had always been bored to death in each other's society, the consequence being that we never spoke to one another, but lived in this way on the most silent but friendly terms. The Mollies did not seem to be able to get on quite alone and were always two or three in society, but they, on the other hand, could not exist without wrangling; so that on a calm day, with no food being thrown overboard for their consumption, they simply quarrelled away their whole time. With their beaks wide open, they seemed to be pouring out the worst language that can be found in Mollie Johnson's dictionary. In this particular they remind us of Mollies at home in England, who chatter continually, and we like to im-

bibe the cheerfulness of these birds constantly bickering, as it reminds us that there is life in this world still.

After ten days of wandering about in the fog, we came to the conclusion that we were regularly lost in this ocean of ice, for all the time we had not had an attempt of sun whereby we could tell our latitude or longitude; the only thing that was obvious to us was that we continued in the Arctic Ocean—this was made evident by the temperature. So that when Jack said, 'I wish they knew at home where we were,' the captain replied, 'And I wish to Heaven we knew whereabouts we were, for we have not been able to take a reckoning for the last two weeks, so that we may be pretty near the North Pole for aught I know.'

It was in the middle of June, and it seemed funny to look out of the skylight and catch a glimpse of our dear old pigs, covered with frost and snow, as they hung out there on the davits.

CHAPTER XIII

FOG CONTINUED

CERTAINLY there is an advantage in snuffing over smoking, as in old times they used to snuff at dinner, whereas you cannot hold a pipe in your mouth and eat at the same time; but our grandfathers used to get in a horrible mess when engaged in taking snuff, which we do not with our tobacco. I remember hearing of an old gentleman who used to remark, 'This world is all very well, but I wish God Almighty had fixed my nose on upside down, so that it would hold all the snuff I want to put in it.' In the same way, during these idle boardship times, we wished that we had been endowed with iron mouths, so that we could smoke all day, as even this is better than doing nothing; for the dulness of these foggy afternoons,—when only mist can be seen all around, when there is not enough

to amuse a kitten on deck, when it is most difficult to find anything that will tickle you, or cause a smile, when icicles constantly keep falling all round, out of the rigging, and the moan of a distant concertina from the galley for'ard gives you a sort of little foresight of eternal wretchedness—is something terrible.

Well, we had had days of thick density, which we hoped might not last into eternity, as we got tired of reading and writing, and the captain, not being able to see the sun, had no arithmetic which he could do. Every afternoon Jack retired to his cabin, and there, with the sliding door closed and the gentle waves beating against the ship's sides, a drowsiness came over him, so that we heard, besides the subdued roar of the distant ice, the more patent sound of muffled breathing, which one might almost call gentle snoring, issuing from that wooden partition, 'where my love lay dreaming the happy hours away.'

A few days before this, however, he had given up his afternoon repose as he suddenly thought of something which ought to be done. He did not, however, care to perform this job openly, so having

taken the little barometer—which was generally supported on a copper nail, in the cabin—into his own retreat, I heard the blob of a cork being taken out of the big oil-tin. Not being able to resist the impulse

THE OIL-CAN

any longer, I wandered into his sanctum apparently unawares ; for although I could hear sounds through these wooden partition walls perfectly distinctly, still I had not eyes sufficiently penetrating to see through half an inch of frame wall. There was Jack bending over his dressing-table, holding in his hands

mixture of oil and barometrical interiors as with my weak intellect I could not possibly define; but the extraordinary part of the performance was that this instrument seemed to work as well as ever after having undergone such deluging and derogatory treatment, viz. it was always lowish and always going down. Every morning, therefore, we expected to have a storm of wind, but the weather absolutely refused to obey Jack's barometer. The picture gives publicity to the sort of scene that fascinated my wondering gaze.

Our captain was captain and owner of this 'Traveller,' and our captain's father was also the captain and owner of a 'Traveller' before her, but that was long long ago. As she was double the tubbage of this vessel and did not measure quite so long, she *must* have been a tub. We learn that she was pretty handy with her canvas, but after a while, say forty years, they tell us that not having been so strongly built as this 'Traveller,' she became rather tender (old and worn out). Eventually, I believe, she came to pieces, as Mr. Whymper says in a volume of 'The

Sea,' 'The "Traveller" of Peterhead was lost in Cumberland Straits in 1856, and the "Alexander" of Dundee killed a whale on Sept. 24, 1864, in the body of which, about three inches beneath the skin, was found a piece of a harpoon, about eighteen inches long, on which these words were engraved, "Traveller," Peterhead, 1838.'

The captain had been sailing in this ship for the last twenty-one years, which makes her out an oldish boat; but when one comes to consider the length of time these arctic boats do last sometimes (one of them which was in Peterhead being forty years old, and I was told she was a good ship yet), this 'Traveller' seemed quite in its *première jeunesse.*

They had no cockroaches aboard, as the cockroach is an animal which shows its sense, for not being able to stand the cold it does not come up the Arctic Ocean. Also there is a peculiar absence of rats. What the reason of this may be I cannot make out, as I am not only certain that rats exist everywhere, but I am also sure of their existence in the harbour at Peterhead.

It is wonderful how men who have been at sea all their lives can tell one ship from another, and mark out all their differences at a distance. When a sail heaves in sight, although it may be fourteen miles away, these men by application to their telescopes will tell you just whether she is a Norwegian or an English ship, what is her build ; and although she may be sailing at the time, they know if there is any steam power aboard or not ; whereas they all look alike to me, sometimes they are carrying an extra mast or two, but all the ships look just like—well, like *ships*, to me in the distance.

There is a great dread of fog established in every arctic sailor's heart. There was scarcely a man aboard who had not been caught at some time or other, in these little whaleboats, and not been able to find the ship for twenty-four or thirty-six hours. They would tell you tales by the hour of how they had been kept out in freezing cold mists, in mortal peril of being surrounded by the floating ice and cut off altogether from the ship.

We were very glad to see our fog clear off at

length and a beautiful day come out. But it seems that you can get cut off by this ice even on the most beautiful days.

In a sort of bay of ice we saw some Harp seals towards which we bent our course, Jack's boat being the most forward. When we got up to this bay we saw that it was getting narrower every moment, and therefore my boat did not enter it, although Jack's boat (which always led the way) was already halfway up the inlet. Then seeing that the Harp seals were making off into the water, he had a couple of shots, with both of which he missed, and it seems lucky for him that he did so, as there would have been no time for getting alongside and skinning them. As it was, the entrance of the bay had closed in, and the wind was blowing great blocks of ice, which came sweeping constantly down past us on the outside, and completely blocking up the mouth of the bay with a wall of ice which was already one hundred yards broad. Then there was great trouble. Jack and five sailors, together with three from my boat, were all hard at work pulling his boat first on to the

ice, and then across three enormous blocks, till they got over and at length launched it on the seaward side, and then we rejoiced greatly, and went aboard ship as soon as possible.

Our captain now did an unlucky thing, as he steered our course away from the ice, thinking that as the fog had cleared off we were in a 'bight' and that we should come to another point stretching away to sea. It so happened that a nor'-westerly wind sprang up when we got away from the ice to the south-east, and this wind kept increasing and blowing stronger till it became a young gale. Now our ship could do most things that she was wanted to, but could not with her square sails make any way up wind with half a gale blowing against her, so that we found ourselves out in the Arctic Ocean, being blown about in any direction but the right one, for three days and three nights: the captain was therefore what you may call 'sweetly befooled' by that nor'-westerly wind which blew. At the same time I should like to know how we were to help falling into a certain amount of deception after ten days of fog, during which time the ice

had changed its position entirely, so that when this fog cleared off we found ourselves by the side of *some* ice which we imagined to be the main pack, but which proved only to be a vast island about fifty miles from the main continent.

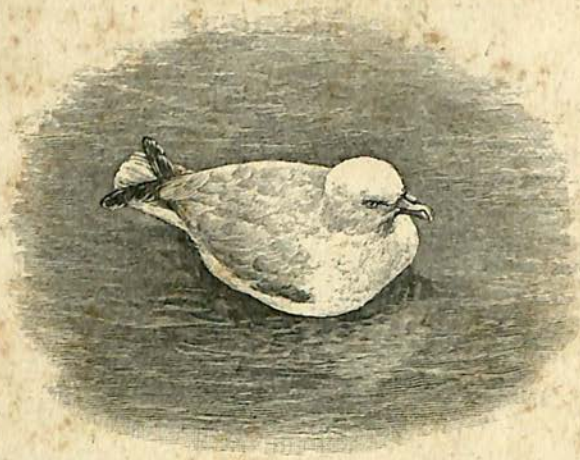
CHAPTER XIV

THOSE MOLLIES

JACK shot some Mollies. When we got them aboard they were not pleasant, as their bodies smelt so terribly fishy. It was on a foggy day that they were slain, and whether the sailors' prognostications are true or not I cannot tell, but this I am sure of, that we did not get any seals for a week after killing them. We shot even many more than we could collect, and their corses lay strewn across our course, and of course the corsair did not pick up all their bodies, as it was too foggy to see them in that coarse air.

One night the captain said that he had about five hundred cartridges which he did not know what to do with, as they did not fit any of the present rifles, and would Jack like to try them in the small rifle

that he shot Mollies with? This small rifle was a patent subterfuging, self-cocking, hammerless, lock-dissembling gun, which he bought some years ago of Messrs. Gibbs, and it exploded a cartridge rather smaller than an express rifle, but made considerably



A WILD MALLEMOKE

more noise about it. Jack was particularly careful in holding his guns, as he had had experience with them, so that when the patent rifle went off in our cabin because Messrs. Gibbs's patent self-manipulating hammer would not keep back when it was wanted to, it did not do any damage to either the captain

Jack, or myself, who were all standing round it; but this powerful weapon shot a bullet right through the stock of a rifle belonging to the captain, which happened to be in its way, and scattered portions of rifle stock, together with morsels of bullet, all over the cabin. As it had not done any real harm it produced a hearty laugh in our otherwise forlorn circle.

June 22 was quite a beautiful day, as the sun shone out without a cloud in the sky. Scarcely a breath of wind disturbed the water, and a sunny warmth pervaded everything; so that the colours of the pieces of ice round about us were brought out by the clearness of the air, and the sunshine on them; they looked what they were, spotlessly white, with the most beautifully transparent blue shadows. I do not mean their shadows in the water, but beneath great caverns and archways, where one saw through into the inner ice and caught a glimpse of fairy scenes with long icicles hanging down; such peeps as in our younger days we read of, but have never before seen in all their glorious purity. Yes, on a day like this, how one was reminded, as we just smoothly passed over the surface

of this Arctic Ocean, of fairy tales such as one has read as a boy, and it brought back visions of scenes that we have never before looked at except in vivid childish imagination. The sky to-night was almost like a picture. There was a great deal of deep blue up above, going down into a serene yellow horizon with some light cloudlets of a pinky colour, hovering across ; and some of the lofty blue was mottled over with very strange mackerel patches, which did not seem to know which way to go, so that the old sailors said 'Yonder means wind :' also there were shafts in the heavens which would have been a glorious aurora borealis if it had only been dark enough to see it, but in this sky they were merely rays of light coming into the glare of perpetual day.

On this day we came across a bit of wood, lying on a patch of ice ; it was not a common thing to fall in with up here, and must either have been some morsel of wrecked ship, or perhaps, as Jack suggested, it was the remains of a petrified snake.

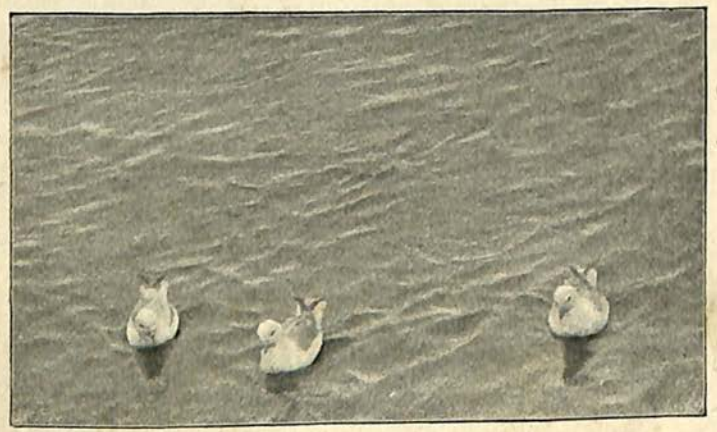
It was Monday at midday that we went down to a most sumptuous pie, composed of two Snowbirds,

one Loom, one Kittiwake, and one Bows'n bird, the interstices being filled up with beef-steak, which we did our duty by. We were quite well after eating this pie, but when tea-time came round, I said to Jack 'Are you hungry?' 'No,' replied he, 'but thank God I'm greedy;' then he finished the remains cold, and looked as though he never wished to see those birds again.

When a Doveky is shot at, he promptly dives, and very often gets under water before the pellets strike the place where he ought to be. Then, if you are pretty close, you can see these birds going along beneath the surface of the sea with their red legs, and the white on the tips of their wings, which looks indeed strange to us, who are only used to the peasoup-like dirtiness of the farmyard pond, where nothing is visible but rings above the water where the moorhen has disappeared. But the ocean out here was perfectly transparent, so that when we had a calm day we could see the movements of these birds beneath the surface of the sea almost as well as we could above.

The Arctic Ocean is about one thousand seven hundred and sixty fathoms, which is about ten thousand five hundred and sixty feet deep where we were; so you could not see the bottom.

Whenever there was a calmish day, the birds



MOLLIES FOLLOWING THE SHIP

were feeding upon what we will call the 'arctic fly.' The captain's name for these singular insects was 'sea-lice,' which does not strike me as being a particularly euphonious or elegant way of expressing yourself when referring to the interesting little creatures. This arctic fly has no windows to strike against,

but as struggling against something seems to be the mission of everything which is born into this world with more than four legs, and it must labour hopelessly against some shining object, therefore this winged insect seizes the water as the only available one within sight. Indeed the sun was the only other visible one, and as we did not enjoy its globe more than once a fortnight and these insects only lived about one day, we suppose that they were right to take this crawling, existence and struggling death in the water, rather than start off skywards through the freezing air.

CHAPTER XV

MY WATCH

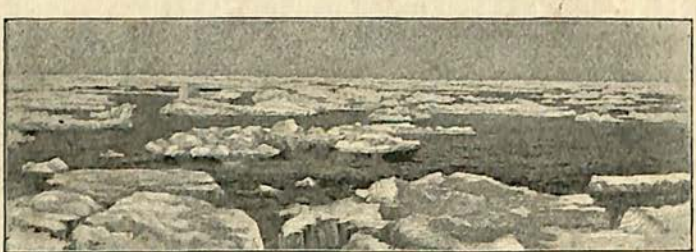
FOR about two days we now existed in a fog-bedaubed expanse, the distance being ever filled in with frozen watery mist. Till about seven o'clock on the second day there was a clearance in the air, and the sun came out in all its splendour, and shining on the masts and sails thawed off what mist had congealed there, sending down on the deck perpetual drippings of water, together with quantities of pieces of ice from the rigging. These blocks of ice were about an inch thick, an inch broad, and a foot long; they came off the ropes in showers whenever a gust of wind shook the rigging, and were smashed to little atoms by the fall. They made such a noise dropping over our heads that while they were falling we could not hear ourselves speak, and the sailor on watch walking up and

down created so much scrunching, as he trod on the bits before they were swept up, that it sounded to us down below exactly like a mill for quartz-crushing; so that you would imagine that it must set his teeth on edge wading through them. One crowd of icicles came pattering down the companion, and we could not but think how exactly they resembled barley-sugar, with their frozen features all cut out the same shape as the ropes upon which they had become congealed.

On June 21 we fell in again with seals, so that the pursuit of them was organised with the greatest rapidity. It was a beautiful evening, with a clear sky and just enough breeze to keep the ship moving. The few clouds that were flecked about the sky were exquisite. Imagine if you can a great strip of moss, of rich purple colour, lying across this never-setting sun, and the blue heavens quite spotless down beneath it. Then behind this dark blue mass of woolly clouds came three or four strips of pink cloudlets lying athwart (as they say among sailors here), and in the far distance the high mountain of Jan Mayen's Island called Beerenburg, away there fifty or sixty miles

off, with its snow-bedecked sides rising up five thousand eight hundred and thirty-six feet into the lofty summer air, and down beneath, right away as far as the eye could reach, just ridges of ice in the dark blue ocean.

On this calm night we set out seal-shooting at half-past eight, and did not get our boat back till



LOOSE PACK ICE

four o'clock next morning. After this we had two hard days' sealing with only three hours in bed between the two days, and then a fog came down which was followed by a great wind, so we could not go on with our sport.

Seal shooting has the disadvantage of too much muchness and not quite enough danger connected with it to find attraction for an Englishman. Yet

there is a great deal of hard work, which lends it a certain charm. At this time of year (the end of June), when the seals are so 'scarey,' as the sailors say, it makes the shooting very difficult, because when there is any wind blowing and any sea on, it is dreadfully hard to hold your rifle straight, and almost impossible to hit the seal in the right place except by a sharp shot. The vital parts of a seal are much scarcer than they are in any other animal, as the beast seems to be quite heartless, or anyway, if you hit him in the heart he apparently bears up under the pressure most wonderfully, and has strength enough remaining to scramble off the ice-block into the sea. It does not seem to kill him till he has sought shelter beneath a piece of ice, from which, if you waited till that piece of ice had melted right away, you would only recover the place where he ought to be; as I understand that the corpse would not remain at the surface of the water more than an hour at the most, and then sink down, Heaven knows how far!

The captain said that my watch would go down nearly 1,760 fathoms if I threw it overboard. I

felt very much inclined to do this; for what was its use to me? It would not speed fast enough, and continually put me out with its sedative ways, whereas if it were thrown overboard you may bet that it would go fast enough to the bottom, where probably some unfortunate shark seeing its glitter (just as I did in the shop window) would seize it and be another dupe, as much done with its fine exterior and flat coggy inside mechanism, as I have always been. The only thing would be that he might find his interior rather cogwheely. I can almost see him now, with a great longing in his heart to reproduce that waistcoat appendage, but unable to do so because of its solid weight and rigid indigestibility. The worst of having a really unreliable watch was, that it was so difficult aboard ship to calculate the time of day. It is true that we had the cabin clock, but there was something wrong with its mode of giving tongue, as it would persist in striking an hour before it ought to. I mean that the stroke of one o'clock sounded out when it should have tolled only twelve. The hour of one was our dinner time, so that when I was very hungry it

was a little too galling, and my heart sank within me when, hearing the clock striking, I rushed down stairs into the cabin, to find nothing laid and no preparations ready, but that we had to wait an hour more for that meal. I do not know whether this was more disagreeable to put up with, or if it was harder to bear, when the steward would bring our tea half an hour before its time, as he frequently did ; then, on our swearing at him for heralding in our meal before the striking hour, he at once showed that there was no ground for complaint, as the captain's chronometer made it half-past six whenever the cabin clock mildly put it half-past five.

My watch certainly is a bad piece of artificial construction, if ever there was one. Having been under the sea for two hours in the Island of Tonga, South Pacific Ocean, and under the Canon Creek in British Columbia ; it will not go steadily, is always losing, and seems quite off its head sometimes During this seal-fishing it seemed to go particularly irregularly, as we frequently caught it stopping altogether for an hour, and only continuing its journey on being

remonstrated with. It is a bad watch, and I am unequal to combating with its peculiarities. I know that I am weak-minded in dealing with its prejudices, and that I have given in to its whims too much; but let it be careful how it uses me, for the snail will turn, and although it is one of my oldest enemies, yet one of these fine days I will send it to a pawnbroker's, or indeed throw it into the sea and be careless of the consequences. Yes, my watch would try the temper of the most long-suffering Job that ever existed in this bad, changeable world.

Seven bells generally signifies half-past el· ·en, but for some reason even this went wrong for bout four days; when the men were busy cutting blubber off the sealskins, then seven bells were not struck till one o'clock. What this was done for, I cannot e· ·tly say; we thought it was merely to amuse o ·r captain, who had nothing to do while they were performing this operation but walk up and down the poop deck and quietly wait for the end. However, *he* showed us a very good reason for it, which was that the men could not eat their dinner unless they had just heard

the tinkling of these seven bells; and their dinner was during this performance put off an hour and a half. Therefore half-past eleven had to be struck at one o'clock, and the real half-past eleven was not taken the very slightest notice of, but terribly slighted all those three days.

Although the seals have it in their power to make a noise, as that one did in the fog, they never utter a sound apparently, when they are on the ice, neither in a friendly spirit or otherwise; but they seem to have some way of communicating to one another when danger is near. It is no matter how much the body of them may be asleep; when you come up to the piece of ice there is always one seal upon it awake, who will waken the others without a sound or movement except of the head. How it is done I do not know, but that it is of frequent occurrence there cannot be a doubt, as although we might be coming up to them dead against the wind and having muffled rowlocks the sleeping ones were always wakened before we approached.

The only time when I have caught the seal sleep-

ing has been when he was perfectly alone upon a piece of ice, in which case I have jolly well caught him, as there are few objects at which I shine with a rifle as I do when I catch the sleeping seal and am able to place the tube exactly on a level with his forehead, knowing that if he should wake he will do me no harm. Having, therefore, clambered up on to the ice, and got silently quite close to him on the frozen noiseless white snow, I can explode with some certainty; so that if circumstances should place me and that seal on this friendly footing, I can generally polish him off. Once now and then, the male Hooded seal has the bladder on his nose extended when he is shot, and when death does extinguish him in this attitude, he seems to have no time to think whether he will look best as a corpse situated thus, or not, so that when you pick up his body with the nose protruding, nine inches deep by four inches broad, nothing else in fact but a huge bladder full of air, you indeed think that he looks a fierce brute. I believe that it is found in the male alone, and whether it is thus extended through fear or not, I cannot say, but it

cannot be any protection, as nothing is easier than to burst this bladder with a dig of a knife or boathook.

Mr. 'Shavings,' our carpenter, who, with the Walrus, was in Jack's boat, very nearly had a serious accident out sealing. The whole boat's crew were on a piece of ice, skinning seals just shot. Mr. Shavings happened to be behind the rest of the party, performing the function of taking the skin and blubber off a corpse. That old sage 'Walrus' had been giving way to some of his knowing remarks, and saying amongst other things, 'You know this is a very rich country,' meaning, we presume, the patch of ice on which they were standing; 'there's many a brave sovereign taken out of this country, but it's rather hard to collect—for yer see the seals won't stop every morning to be shot at'—and so on, as he went on skinning; till one of the party saw Mr. Shavings' seal half divided, with a slit down its chest, lying on its back, but no Mr. Shavings. Now, as the bits of ice on which seals lie are as a rule perfectly flat, and as bare as a plate off which two hungry dogs have just eaten their dinner, they could not make out what had become of our

carpenter. Then they saw in the middle of the ice, just where he had been standing, a hole through which the sea kept dashing whenever a big wave came, and rising up with a suppressed murmur. And on looking away out to sea, a hundred yards off, our carpenter was to be discerned swimming for his life against a current by which he had been swept out, and against which he was making such headway that he was soon out of that freezing ocean and on the ice. A great many pieces of ice were like this one, all undermined by the sea, so that it was often very thin on the top, just where you might be standing. Indeed, this young man must think himself lucky that the sea, where he fell into it, had the force and inclination to draw him through that ice-bound cavern; he might so easily have been suffocated by the in-flowing water, that I think it was an extraordinary piece of luck, his getting out the way he did. The only thing then was to row back to the ship, which happened not to be far off, where he changed his clothes.

This was quite a different affair from the mate's, who fell into the sea with a pair of my field-glasses

in his hand. The mate was decidedly a heavy little man, and one day, as soon as he had got out of the boat, the piece of ice on which he was standing, which was about the size of a large tennis court, gave way and split into four pieces which went floating over the deep blue waves, leaving the mate plunging about in their depths. He held on to my glasses like grim death. I think he had a sort of vague idea, that as they were so old and worn-out looking, they must not go to the bottom, anyway. This is the second marine disaster that they have been in and come out of all right, for on this occasion we saved our mate. As we were then returning to the ship with a load of sealskins, he had not to wait long in this saturated condition.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SKIPPER AND THE SLEEPY CAPTAIN

JACK asked me to tell him the story of the first marine disaster that my field-glasses were a victim to, so here it is. If it is lacking in interest, it is at any rate true.

'THE TALE OF THE SKIPPER AND THE SLEEPY CAPTAIN.

There is a great coral reef off the eastern coast of Queensland called the Barrier Reef, which runs up about twenty-five miles away from the shore; there are, however, several small breaches in its course, and one which is marked down as a large opening occurs just opposite Trinity Bay.

We left the port of Townsville on April 18, 1886,

in a small two-masted schooner (called the "Upolu," of about one hundred and twenty tons), meaning to be absent from civilisation at least six months, as we were going to coast round the Solomon Islands, which were the only uncivilised group of islands remaining in the universe, and, therefore, infinitely attractive and entertaining to me, as on visiting them you always either got killed yourself, or had the advantage of killing some one else, and this was a state of society which I, in those days, thought perfectly perfect.

'When rowing out of port to the "Upolu," which lay about two miles from the town, I noticed that our captain was very quiet—in fact that he could scarcely speak, which did not impress me very favourably—but I hoped when we got away from the seductions of the land, that he would recover.

'We sailed away about one hundred and fifty miles up between the mainland and the reef; then getting opposite the Trinity opening, which was marked in the charts as being a division in the reef about thirteen and a half miles broad, we made for this inlet, only

about three miles from a small sandy island, which the captain knew should be to the southward of our ship going between the reefs.

'It seems a pity that this coast of Queensland should be improperly surveyed, as the division between the coral reefs seemed to be only about three miles broad, instead of thirteen and a half, as I believe it is marked in the charts. Of course the captain may have mistaken this opening altogether, but I should hardly think that this was probable, as he told me he had sailed out this way twice before.

'On Saturday, April 24, at nine o'clock in the morning, the sun shone out, making everything appear bright and cheerful. The sea water was as clear and translucent as sea water ever is, out in those tropical climates, so that if there had been no wind we should have seen right down, down—well, I do not know how deep. As it was, in spite of the surface ripple, there seemed to be something white below the soft green of the tropical waves which looked strange to us, leaning over the side of the ship. Presently, after gazing for some time, it seemed to approach nearer. Then

we suddenly became aware that it was the glittering uneven surface of white coral.

'The wind off the coast of Queensland, apparently, almost always blows from the south-east.

'The captain was at the wheel, having been up steering all the night, as there is always some difficulty about conducting a ship between these coral reefs. He had taken a drop of whisky to steady his nerves, and thought that he had the right bearings of the place. However, in spite of having been through this way on two former occasions, he was a little out in his calculations. But then a touch of the 'cratur' makes so much difference, even on the most brilliant mornings, and is apt to make everything and everybody look foggy; while things which are at a distance in this atmosphere look quite close, and even the horizon is not steady, but keeps rising up or wriggling about like a snake. It is all very well for you who have lived on land all your life to laugh when you hear of such a disturbed atmospherical condition of things, but you do not know what we suffer on the ocean in these unsteady seas.

'I thought of telling the drowsy captain just what I saw beneath the ship, but he had been so much annoyed the day before, when I made some remarks *à propos* of his sailing, that I concluded to keep quiet and calmly pray for a happy ending.

'Presently there was a great crash, followed by a dismal grating sound. We had been going through the water at nearly seven knots an' hour, but now all was still, especially the ship, which had come to a conclusion on the reef. In a few minutes a rushing up and down took place amongst the sailors, as they all came aft and then ran forward to see what was wrong; till they saw that they were wrecked, and knew that, the "Upolu" being an iron ship, there would be no chance of getting her off. Though even if she had not been constructed of iron, and had not had her bottom caved in, there would have been little chance of getting her away from the coral-bed, as there was now a strong north-easterly wind, blowing great waves up on to the coral. The spring tides were, as the Yankees say, "just played out," and it was nearly high water when

we struck, so that the combination made our case quite hopeless.

'We all saw now that there was nothing to look forward to, as we were aboard a wrecked vessel, and as the trades kept increasing in force, the hammering and bumping against the uneven coral bottom, combined with an unsteady sort of wavering motion created by the ship, kept us awake all through that Saturday night; but at present, although the ship's bottom kept filling with water, it had not got up to our cabin.

'The next day was Easter Sunday, and all that day the schooner was heeling over more and more to the port side. The inhospitable shores of Queensland were about twenty-five miles off, and all that we could see were gaunt cliffs rising up out of the distant sea, as this was a part of the coast which presents but a steep rugged face to those looking at it from the ocean. It is an unfriendly coast, with no white man's dwelling for twenty miles in either direction, only Australian blacks, who are said to be unkind to the shipwrecked mariner. In fact there is no doubt that

they ate one out of two white men who came up here to plant tobacco the year before we were wrecked. The nearest towns were Cairns and Port Douglas, which are forty miles apart as the crow flies, and probably nearly double that distance to walk.

'At about eleven o'clock that night we turned in feeling very dismal, as the wind, which had been howling through our rigging all day, had now increased; and it began to rain, with the almost unbroken clouds coming up from the south-east, scudding over our heads. Of course with such a high wind, that most harassing sound of the iron ship grinding against the coral bed was not too enticing to listen to, and when we had only been asleep two hours we were awakened by the vessel turning right over on her port side, so that the bottom of my berth became its side, added to which I heard a sort of gurgling sound like water beneath my bunk, which proved to be the sea coming in and filling up my cabin.

'The captain all this time was not in a pleasant frame of mind, for he had remained in an apparently

thoughtful condition for two days on the cabin sofa. Finding ourselves in this situation, we naturally wanted to have the cabin lamp lit, so as to take what things we could save upon deck and hide them there beneath mackintoshes, so that they might be out of the way of sea and rain. But the captain seemed to think that the night was the time for sleep, and that during the night (as they say in a Latin grammar) it was to be slept by him. So that as soon as we had lighted the cabin lamp, he always found some means of putting it out. We therefore worked on all through that night in perfect darkness, putting everything that we could find of value, such as a telescope, binnacles, &c., on the deck boards the side that was out of the sea, and at eight o'clock, when daylight at length came, the captain roused himself up and ordered the boats away.

'We had found the skylight a most useful commodity latterly, as when the ship had heeled over so much that the companion was beneath the sea, we used this skylight for getting down into the cabin and shifting articles on deck, as our cabin floor was now

beneath the water, so that we stepped from the skylight on to the table.

'After consuming one biscuit each, and a cup of cocoa which we managed to make, the captain ordered up the smaller of the two small boats (a mere dinghy), and putting enough baggage on board to make the greatest discomfort to those rowing in her, told five of us to pack ourselves in and set off for the little flat sandy island, which was only about three miles away, across the outlet between the reefs. It was still pouring with rain, the wind was almost dead ahead, and, worst of all, there was such a strong current running in this opening between the coral reefs, that we thought we should never make that island against the headwind.

'We had taken nothing to eat with us, as the captain had roused himself sufficiently to say, that he in his strong sailing boat, would follow with all the food which we could want; so that, having bargained for a small sugar tub, half full of fresh sugar-and-water—as there was no time to clean it out—our boat was pushed off from the gradually subsiding wreck,

and we left her never to return. This was also the last time that we ever saw that captain.

'By one o'clock we had been rowing for five hours, and had only made one mile of our journey, because the wind, the sea, and current were all against us, and having nothing edible aboard, some of us seemed already tired of life. But we went on pulling steadily, taking it in turn to handle an oar, till 5.30 in the evening, when we at length accomplished that three miles, and arrived with blistered hands and aching backs alongside the sandy island.

'"Sand Island," as it is marked in the charts, was a little bit of a sandy spot, not more than two hundred yards long by one hundred broad, left by the waves on the northern edge of the reef, and on the southern side of the Trinity opening.

'On our arrival we found that the other boat—which it was true we had not seen all day—could not be discerned with the naked eye anywhere; but presently, looking through my field-glasses, to our astonishment we descried her far away, with a sail hoisted, making towards Cairns, which must have

been thirty miles from the wreck in a south-westerly direction. We knew at once that this was our boat, and that the captain had left us on the island without a particle of food, to get off as best we could ; for he was such a drowsy man. He had left us to starve to death upon that deserted shore, or be wrecked at sea in the little dinghy, having gone away to seek the land himself in an exceedingly strong seaworthy boat with a mast and sail. We had a bit of the ocean, twenty-five miles broad at any rate, to cross before we got to the mainland ; and such a mainland, with huge waves ever breaking on the coast, and nothing when we got ashore but the most hostile natives to receive us. There is no doubt that we were treated atrociously, and if ever I meet that somnambulant captain again, may it be somewhere where British laws are unknown, and I hope that I shall be armed to the teeth, for he was apparently such a torpid man, with a quiet devil hard at work beneath the surface.

'Having a rook rifle aboard, I shot three seagulls before it became quite dark, and the men collected about twenty of these birds' eggs. Five of the eggs

were edible, and there were five of us. The rest had young birds concealed beneath their shells, so that we found them just a mass of young feathers, and anything but palatable; as an egg with a youthful unboiled seafowl in it is not an enticing form of food, especially as we could not cook our birds or the eggs. The few bits of wood which we collected round the island were uselessly wet with sea water and the rain, so the men pulled up the boat on shore, where we turned it over to make a sort of covering from the rain, and we made up our minds to go to rest for the night supperless.

'Hardly had we got beneath the saturated rugs and lain down on the soft moist sand, than we were asleep; as there are times, such as the present, when having been constantly worried by the beating of the ship against the coral floor, and not having slept properly for two nights, it seemed such a blessing to have one's mind freed from the constant rattling, the weary grating sound; and worn out with exertion we fell asleep, as though we were not soaking wet, and as though the sand were a bed of feathers.

'There were large crabs upon this island, living in holes in the ground like rabbits in England. Crabs as big as a page of this book, but infinitely tamer than rabbits at home. No sooner had we lain down and covered ourselves with our rugs, than about ten of these crabs collected on the top of us, and would not move entirely away, however much we kicked. We were too tired to bother about these interesting eight-footed crustaceans, and so soon fell asleep.

'But the mate had a story about alligators which he poured into our willing ears on the morrow. He said there were two men who went out fishing for "Bêche de mer" on these coasts, and had been compelled, in the following of their craft, to sojourn on one of the islands. I say "sojourn" when I have no right to make use of such an expression, as, according to the mate, they were eaten by alligators, may be the first night that they came to live there, or perhaps it was not till they had been there a fortnight. Anyway, as they did not return, friends came out to look for them; but nothing was found on their island except one man's boot, a match, and

a morsel of cheese; also crocodiles' tracks without end in the sand; but nothing more was ever seen of the men. You can believe this tale or not, as you like, it makes no difference to me, but I never heard of sea alligators before.

'On the next morning the rain had left off; and at about 6.30, when we had launched the boat, we erected an oar mast, and made a square sail out of the mate's bed cover; it was the feeblest thing that it were possible to imagine, as it kept tearing, so that we had continually to mend it up. We proceeded in a north-westerly direction, straight before the wind, towards Port Douglas, which we thought was about thirty-five miles away; this being the only direction in which we could go with our sail. If it had not been for the sea, which kept breaking over our stern, we should have been quite a merry crew; but presently, when the wind rose and the sea got up, we had to keep two men baling the water out the greater part of the morning. Thus we wandered on over that treacherous waste of water, without seeing anything except the steep, gaunt,

rugged shores to the westward, while all the rest was sea, sea and nothing else but the wavy ocean. We were continually ducked by the waves that plashed over the boat's side, but that made little difference, as we had now been eighteen hours wet through, and thought that a little salt water was beneficial to our constitutions, after being so drenched with fresh rain.

'At about mid-day we saw a little cloud coming up over the horizon, far, far away ahead. It was a black cloud compared with the dull grey of the sky above, and the cook said that it was the smoke from a steamer. We all watched it with the most amazing interest —and it turned out to be a steamer coming our way. Then we were glad, for we thought that, if her course did not lay too far out to sea, she was sure to see us, and make for the wretched shipwrecked mariners who were floating about in such an internally empty condition.

'She came on, nearer and nearer; as each minute elapsed she seemed to be closer, till at length she was right abreast of our boat, and not more than a mile away. But she did not stop.

'Then, in despair, I waved a dirty, soaking handkerchief, for our hearts were sinking, and we wondered how long we should be able to keep up above the waves, if she did not see us ; as the sea, in which there had been a lull, seemed to be getting up again, and the men had to keep baling all the time. When the steamer had got about half a mile on her retreating course she apparently saw us, for suddenly, to our great joy, we noticed that the propeller had ceased to throw up water, and she stopped. I knew then that we were saved ; for even if our little craft had filled with water, as she seemed likely to do now, with her head turned to the wind, still those British tars could lower their boat, and preserve us from a watery grave.

'Then there was trouble aboard our boat, as the oar which had been erected for a mast refused to come out of the round hole in which it was wedged, and we could not row without removing it, as there was no room to sit. Even when this difficulty was righted, we found ourselves nearly a mile and a half from the ship, which, against the wind, would have taken us an hour to pull. But the steamer put

round and came towards us; so that soon we were alongside her, and climbing up the rope ladders which were thrown overboard to receive us.

'This ship was the "Bulimba," belonging to the British India Company, and was coming out from England to Australia, full of passengers and emigrants. It was thanks to the "Bulimba's" captain and first officer's watchful care (combined with my own dirty handkerchief) that we were thus saved.

'Having heard that the captain of the "Upolu" would go through the courts at Brisbane, I hastened there to see what would be the result, and waited in that city with a great longing for revenge rising up in my heart. For many days I tottered up and down the paths of the Botanical Gardens there; wandering all day long amid those sunny brilliant walks, conning over what I would say to the judge, and how I would wither the captain with the breath of abuse.

'When I stood meditative beneath the shadow of

ONE OF US. *Jack Fecit.*

some lofty palm which raised its tattered leaves into the mistless blue of those tropical heavens, or looked down into the gentle river so peacefully flowing at my feet; then, what glorious satire, what strength of argument, I indulged in to myself; or when I slew a mosquito ravishingly perched upon my forehead with one well-directed blow, how convincingly I spoke against that pitiable wretch the captain, now (figuratively) withering and cringing beneath my sarcasms.

'It was here that I watched the pale butterfly, wafted on large downy wings, and seeming to glory in the never-failing Queensland brightness, hovering ever on sunshiny nothingness. It was here that alone, in the afternoon beauty of a never-fading summer, I thought thoughts against that captain—thoughts which never had any issue from this budding. Yes, all these evil words which I conjured up and all these damning arguments were vain, as one afternoon I heard that the captain had surreptitiously crept through the courts in the morning, and got away, as there was no one to give evidence against him.

'Ah! why did I not go straight to the court house, instead of wandering senselessly up and down the gravelled walks in that painted Botanical Garden, thus preventing the captain from absconding? I failed utterly in finding out where he had gone to, or if he had changed his name. Oh, that sleepy silent captain was without doubt a very subtle man.

'This is the end of the story, as—with my tail between my legs—I went straight back to my British home in this "Bulimba," whose officers through their kindness had become my dearest friends.'

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTAIN ROBERTSON'S TELESCOPE

WE had two mates aboard the 'Traveller,' but neither of them was capable of sailing a ship by himself, at least we thought not, but our opinion was not worth much. However, these two mates seemed to get the ship mixed up in the most horrible way whenever the captain was below. Supposing that there was a lot of ice which had to be got through; they went at it like men; but after a while they knew not which way they were going, and could hardly make out which the sea was, which the vessel, and which the ice, because they became so confused. This seems hardly credible; but I can assure anyone that it is true. As it was necessary that the captain should take rest sometimes, we could not avoid these little difficulties.

On July 3 I was trying to varnish some photographs which had been taken the previous week. It is necessary for this operation to make the glasses hot on which your photographs are, and as there was no fire-place aboard, we had to heat them over the stove. When you have got the photograph plate up to a blood heat, you pour the varnish out of a bottle on to the plate, and then let it run back into the bottle off one corner of the glass plate. It is true that I did not shine at this pastime, as I could never manage to get all the superfluous spirit varnish back again into the neck of the bottle, and nearly always spilt some. On this occasion I foolishly tried to return the varnish to the bottle over the top of the stove, so that in about two seconds there was a sound like a thud, and some varnish which was just spilt on to the top of the stove was all ablaze. At the same time it ignited the varnish which covered the plate in my hand, to say nothing of some of this spirituous liquid that I had just spilt on my hands, and the mouth of the bottle that I was holding; also it burnt up one eye-lash and singed my hair considerably.

This episode tickled me so much that I could not help laughing, as the situation struck me as being so ludicrously and absurdly comic. At the same time I dropped the bottle, which went trundling all over the floor-cloth, spouting out great patches of flaming spirit wherever the motion of the pitching ship rolled it; and of course the burning plate fell out of my grasp and broke into a thousand flashing smithereens on the floor. Here, however, Jack with the utmost presence of mind came to the front, and, seizing the hearthrug, dashed it down on the flames, managing after a while to extinguish all the blazing liquid except the bottle, which, having rolled all over the floor, squirting out wreaths of flame, we succeeded in pouncing down on and extinguishing. It was a fearful moment of time, and had there been anything of a more inflammable nature in the cabin, we should now have been freezing our souls out on the island of Jan Mayen, which was, we thought, only forty miles distant, and the ship would have been no more. But, as it was, 'by the kind dispensation of Providence,' as some would say, but I called it by Jack's timely

aid, we managed to extinguish the flames which otherwise would have enveloped the ship.

Then we were stationary for four days, 'lying to,' as it was called, which is done by putting the helm to leeward and having only a couple of small sails up. During these four days there was a great wind blowing, but as we were sheltered from it by an enormous field of ice, the sea was not rough, the only objection being that we kept colliding with huge icy fragments. At dinner time one day, we struck a piece with such force that it suddenly knocked our soup, yes our favourite soup, all over our trousers; we did not know which to mourn the loss of most, our soup or our bepottaged trousers. As our nether garments had by this time become so covered with seal oil, that no 'decoction of flesh' could get through them to our legs beneath, we did not mind the spilling of soup from that point of view, but it was hot.——

One Captain Robertson of Dundee had the only other English ship that was up here sealing this year. Her name was the 'Polar Bar' or 'Polar Star,' we never could make out exactly which. But anyway,

she was a terrible old barque-rigged tub of three hundred tons; and with her screw and the assistance of the wind she could make about three and a half knots an hour. Why this ship was ever called the 'Polar Bar' we could not understand, as she was not white but a dirty brown colour all over. She was not clean looking either inside or out; in fact, she did not resemble that polar animal in any particular, except that she was then full of seals, which I believe that every polar bear professes to be at this time of the year.

Our captain, as I have said, had a longish telescope which he wielded with unerring precision over the distant ice blocks; but it was nothing in length, or in spottiness on its outside lenses, compared with Captain Robertson's. The captain of the 'Polar Bar' hallooed out to us one day in passing, that he could see hundreds more seals on another block of ice away up to windward, and although our captain could not discern them, still he went with his ship up there. Our two telescopes, being directed in the same course, we could only make out six seals, who, detecting our approach, and fearing our intentions, all absconded.

Captain Robertson's telescope—which was certainly the largest, longest, and most magnificent weapon of its sort that we ever encountered, and must indeed have struck all his seafaring crew with awe, I might almost say with terror—proved also a false instrument in the following matter. It descried a great way off *three* Norwegian steam sealing ships (or 'steam *sail*ing ships' if you think that sounds better), and told our captain about them: but as our captain could only see two, he thought that there must be something wrong with the further off of his two magnifying glasses; so, with the utmost inconvenience to himself, standing in the crow's nest, he hauled the further end of the telescope in, took the glass out and cleaned it; polished it up with his breath and quite a clean red-and-white handkerchief, just taken from a drawer in his cabin; polished it till it shone like the midday sun, and, putting it back again in place, could see nothing but the two ships. So he said, 'I don't believe there are three Norwegian ships in sight,' and—well—there were not.

It was false, not exactly a swindle on Captain Robertson's part, as the magnifying intensity of his magnificent telescope was to blame more than the erring eye of mortal man, which is but a doubtful thing to put confidence in when applied to the other end of a slotty-glassed spelescope; no! I mean a spotty-glassed telescope.

The folks aboard all talk of 'this country' as though we were not in the middle of the ocean, two hundred miles from Greenland. Well, as Jack said, 'if ever I come out to this country again I'll bring a bally big telescope with me to impress the natives, as that one which the captain has is only five foot long, and mine is even shorter; about the magnifying power and seeing through it, well, that's nothing; but if you want to go down with the sailors aboard a ship like this, you must bring a long enough telescope with you.' Who he meant by 'the natives' we could not make out, as there were no natives, oysters or Greenlanders, within four hundred miles. The Greenland natives, who I believe are called Esquimaux, do not live on this ice-bound side of the

country at all, but reside altogether on the further coast.

It was the middle of July, and it seemed funny to

OUR HAMS

look up and see our dear old pigs covered with frost. If they'd only known in life how excellent they'd be after death, then (I feel sure) there would have been no objection on their part to dying. And in the same

way with us; if we could think that there would be so much use in us after death as there was in these pigs, if we could think that we should be as much regretted when we were completely gone as these pigs were,—then life would be without doubt happier, and death more peaceful and tender.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUR LAST DAY'S SEAL SHOOTING

ABOUT July 8 we had a change in the weather, the thermometer going up above freezing, and the wind coming from the south-east so that it rained all day. This was the first time we knew what rain was like since leaving home, as otherwise we have suffered very little fall : on this day, however, Negretti and Zambra's wet bulb thawed. Hitherto it had remained solid ; it was just a piece of cotton like a lamp-wick in a small glass of solid ice, but on this day it threw off the glittering mass with which it was surrounded, and stood simply knee deep in water, with all the ice gone. The rain was a great trouble, as not only did it make you (strange to say) wet if you went out in it without first cloaking yourself with mackintoshes, but it came into the cabin, running down the stove pipe in the most

thoughtless fashion, and as Jack said, 'I did not know the rain came in elsewhere' (I'll swear it sounded like), 'but you just look at the drops from the deadlights on our pet jam.' This was during six o'clock tea, and it certainly was coming in through the roof, gradually filling up our glass jam tray with the most silly, drivelling wetness, making our best gooseberry preserve almost uneatable. It had soaked through and absorbed the taste of about three inches of a most indigestible solid mass of putty, before being precipitated into our jam.

Although the steward was all this time getting more what he ought to be, yet we feared that he was still at heart what they call in the Bible 'an unjust steward.' He now wiped out our washing basins every day, and was constantly seen cleaning up any spots of dirt which might be apparent on the white painted cupboards beneath our bunks; also he wasted some time brushing up the piece of carpet that covers the floor in either of our cabins; but still there was scarcely ever enough for him to do except on days when we went forth to slay the seal. On these occasions we all

left the ship, twelve souls, in the two whaling boats, and then the steward was left aboard, with the ship's cook ; a boy whom we called Mr. Mitchell ; and the captain. This ship's cook on these occasions was also called the ship-keeper. Why the captain and every one else should call him by this name, or why the captain himself should not be termed ship-keeper, we could not make out ; but these are mysteries that even aboard ship it is as well not to try to unravel, for how should landlubbers like ourselves be able to fathom such peculiarities. It is enough to say that these four men had to look after the whole sailing of the vessel, very often for twelve hours at a stretch, besides doing the cooking and so forth that was required for us, returning hungry. Otherwise our steward had not enough to do, which he evidently found very irksome, as he not only laid the cloth for our meals an hour before they took place, and stood idly in the pantry from that time, occasionally watching us in the cabin and evidently bored to death for want of occupation ; but when one went on deck to shoot at 'birdies' (as Jack called them) which kept flying around, there was

no peace even on those broad boards, because the steward was ever present smiling and trying to catch your eye, and make pointless remarks.

Why 'Mr. Mitchell' should have been thus called by his surname we did not know; anyway, he was a boy with a most goodnatured face, who looked as if the world were treating him well. The captain had, with the greatest difficulty, taught this boy to steer the ship, as when he came aboard, although he had been at sea all his life, he knew absolutely nothing of marine matters. Often have we heard the captain hallooing 'starboard,' and this goodnatured fool has promptly put the helm down to port, so that his former teaching at sea seemed to have done him absolutely no good; but we should doubtless see improvements, as no ordinary young man could go on being such an agreeable smiling idiot as this one was. To see him when he was at the wheel, with his good-tempered face all over wrinkles, so that he looked quite savage, was a sight to be remembered; or when he was gazing up aloft to follow the captain's directions from the crow's nest, with his boyish face all

over lines and his heart set on watching; his interesting countenance trying to make itself master of what he was doing; then you could trace the difficulty which youthful negligence had in following out the words of command which came from the old and wise.

'It was on July 10 that we had our last day's seal shooting. It was a good deal spoilt by the presence of a Norwegian steamer, which, seeing us in an interval between the fogs waiting about outside the ice for these mists to clear off, thought we must be waiting for something; and so indeed we were—having seen the seals before the fog came down and prevented us from venturing after them. We were therefore dodging up and down till it should clear finally, which it did about eight o'clock in the morning, and left us the brightest, most summerlike day that we had had at all. We went out into the ice—some of it in great pieces as much as two acres in extent—and if it had not been for that Norwegian steamer, we should have had all the sport that we wanted; but with her six boats and forty men ploughing her way in amongst the scattered blocks, so that we thought at one time

our very lives were in danger from the Norwegian weapons—she was not a greatly encouraging sight.

However, at length we got back, after an absence of nine hours, to the 'Traveller,' our boats being loaded down, with sealskins and blubber. The sealskins are always counted over when they were hauled from the whaleboats into the ship, and our steward marked them down on one of the white-painted 'winch bits,' one stroke for each skin that came aboard. Of course there was the greatest emulation amongst the sailors for the honour of having got most seals in the day.

There was on the ship's deck by this time a great pool of dark-coloured blood. It was apart from the sealskins, and had trickled down to where the boards of the deck had become indented from sailors from time immemorial standing there to haul on the ropes which come down the mainmast. After our dinner I went up to the captain—for those thick volumes of gore were giving me quite a turn—and said to him, 'Now, captain, what is that liquid we see on the deck yonder? Surely that thick, glutinous, sombre mass

must be human blood. To think that no sooner did we turn our backs on this ship, on this glorious summer's day, with all its sunshine and windless beauty—to think we cannot leave these three men in your charge for ten short hours, but must return to find that your temper has got the better of you, and in our absence you have shed all this blood. Yes, that you have shed blood, and not taken the trouble to extract your handkerchief and wipe it up.' There were about four gallons in a pool on the deck. 'It is too bad,' I continued, 'and when we get back to England we shall tell of you.' Here I paused, being out of breath, and the captain hastened to explain that it had run out of the sealskins piled up there. Then I understood and said, 'Oh ah! yes, perhaps you are right, but you shouldn't go scaring one's life out like that.'

CHAPTER XIX

OUR SECOND MATE

WE had now given up sealing for good, so that two days after this the blood was cleared out of the boats with sand and hot water, and the decks were also scoured with the same cleansing materials. The captain begged some sand from the skipper of the 'Polar Bar,' as we had not brought sufficient with us for use on the ship. Cleaning the ship is where this sand comes in useful; indeed, what is a man without sand? It would be impossible to get off all the remains and scattered fragments of seals' interiors which have accumulated; all the mess created by blubber and blood, without this cleansing refuse of seashells and granite rock. Yes! wet sand with a morsel of old sailcloth is the thing *par excellence* to clean off this dried-up lubrication. With these articles, and plenty

of them, we accomplished it; so that the ship looked as though it had been freshly painted, although it fortunately did not smell thus. The only place aboard where no blood was spilt was the cabin; this was because we avoided the discussion of politics with our captain.

Our second mate had an enormous, very tangled, and rather disreputable-looking beard, from beneath which he talked broad Scotch so that we could not understand a word he uttered. In fact I believe, from the thick way in which he spoke, that he must have had a beard inside his mouth as well as *dehors*, added to which I fear that he was deaf, as he never took the slightest notice of what we said. He talked just as if he had got his mouth full of Bath buns, and therefore could not speak plainly. The poor fellow had an attack of what Jack called 'gastric neuralgia.' This secret trouble I call 'tummie ache,' but he termed it 'spasims in the stomick.' It seems that he applied to the steward for medicine and was promptly dosed with twenty-five drops of chlorodyne, which he fortunately brought up again. Next day he made

application again for medicine, so the skipper drenched him with any quantity of castor oil. The following morning he was very unwell, as most men would be after absorbing this amount of castor oil, but eventually he got over his trouble. As we have no doctor aboard, he did not care to die, neither had he any excuse for lying in bed any longer, so that our second mate quite recovered. And who indeed would not, if he were made, under the command of a stern eye, to put himself outside all that oil?

He did not seem very sharp at picking up anything that was told him, as the captain had arranged a code of signals in order that when we were out in the whaleboats away from the ship, we might know what he wanted us to do: for of course, when he was perched aloft in the crow's nest wielding his enormous telescope over the blocks of ice, he could see the locality of the seals infinitely better than we could right down below. We happened once to be about two and a half miles away from the ship, and had just concluded bagging some ten seals which had been pretty close to us, when I saw that our skipper

had hoisted some signal flags. I therefore put up my field-glasses, and told the mate just what flags were flying and how many of them, asking him whether they referred to our boat, and what they meant. The dear old deaf Scotchman did not know in the least, as the captain's parting words had just crossed themselves in his memory, so that he had not the remotest notion of what he had been ordered to look out for. Fortunately Georgey (one of our men) had heard when the captain had been arranging this code and giving his orders, so, following out the hint conveyed across the briny, we soon came on more seals.

Now for three days, as there was no wind, we were not advancing at all rashly over the despondent waves. We constantly asked the captain what his glass was doing, as ours, except when it sank, was immovable as a rock. He would always tell us that 'she was standing steady,' and as the ship was also perfectly motionless, we came to the conclusion that we were doing a great thing in this Radical age, in 'standing steady,' but at the same time we could not help remarking on the slowness of our progress, upon which

this second mate said, so distinctly that his meaning could be justly adhered to, 'Truly your meals don't sit well unless your mind is satisfied,' which was indeed a remarkable way of looking at things. They say that a contented man generally grows fat, in which case, if this be a truism, I must be the most discontented person that ever breathed.

The sudden appearance of this mate in a new, or rather an unusual pair of trousers, caused us to ask him why he had donned these fresh garments; to which he replied, 'Me others was pretty well wore out. I kep' sewin' 'em and mendin' 'em up, till they became all mend, and you couldn't tell which colour me old trousers was, and which colour was the mend, so that I was obliged to put on these best ones.' Then he swaggered up and down in a pair of homespuns, which through having been too frequently washed, had become so short that the two patches which had been originally over the knees were now just under the pockets, and were consequently infinitely shorter than his lean, tall legs. He added that he had formerly

lots of 'breeks,' and we thought that he must have then been like the Irishman, who had three shirts, one to put on, one to put off, and one to go without; but now this best pair were the only ones that our mate possessed.

CHAPTER XX

BROWN'S NAUTICAL ALMANACK

ONE day I asked Jack if he could get me an almanack; so he, after rummaging for awhile about the bookshelves, said, 'Here's a nautical one that I have found in the captain's cabin;' and he handed me 'Brown and Sons' Nautical Almanack.' 'Oh, that will do nicely,' I replied; 'I merely wanted to look out the day of the month, for the sun has been out so many weeks now, and the clocks have been going so wrongly, that I just wished to see if we were in the middle of the day or of the night. You see this continued mist has made me so foggy that I have not the barest notion of where we are, or in fact of anything.' Then I turned over the pages of this interesting book till I found July, but could not make out the meaning of anything in that book.

Under the heading of July came, in big letters at the top of the page, these words, 'Astronomical Ephemeris,' which frightened me; but this was also an extract from the same page, 'Mean time may be found by subtracting ·019 S. from sidereal time given.' Now, if this is not a puzzler for all simple-minded Christians, we want to know what is. They have the face to say so calmly the way in which the mean time can be found, that one would think from reading over this sentence everyone ought to know how this is done. Well, I gave it up.

One of the columns was headed, 'The Moon in London,' beneath which came four rows of figures down to the bottom of the page, and continued right to the other side of July. Messrs. Brown and Sons were very obliging in giving us all this information, but why do they call this a Nautical Almanack, if they mean to block up their pages with lunar facts from London town? I wanted to know the day of the month, the week, the year.

On the other side of the page was a quantity of printed matter, so I 'scanned this leaflet,' as a novelist

would say. There was 'Woe' written at the head of a column, and then nothing but three-lettered words without apparent meaning all down it. Surely there was something mysterious about this, for we could not understand any one of these three-lettered enigmas. Was it English that was written there? Was it Chinese? Was I off my head, or what could be the meaning of these long words? There was one page headed, 'Semi-diameters and Horizontal Parallaxes of Planets.' I should think that the man who compiled this was either a lunatic or else he put it all down as a joke, to try and confuse such a confiding young man as myself, for a little further back I saw, 'April 2, at nine o'clock, Phenomena in Aphelion.' Now it so happens that I was awake and up for breakfast at nine o'clock on April 2. I was in London on that morning, and saw no 'Phenomena in Aphelion,' so that I beg to differ from Messrs. Brown and Sons; or, if the phenomena did take place, I was quite unconscious of it, and it passed away without my being able to make any observation. In this work I could not even find the ordinary days of the

week put down, and yet it calls itself an almanack. I could not see which day was Sunday, and none of the lessons were mentioned, which they always used to be in the almanacks of our youth. In fact, this little book was totally incomprehensible and absolutely useless to men of cultured minds. We did not want this Nautical Almanack, as it was not a time-table made for cultivated geniuses. It seemed to be cram full of a nebulous and heterogeneous mass of figures, which look to the uneducated as though they might mean ever so much; but just let men of our resources get hold of them, and in a moment of time they see the hollowness of its whole construction, and how it has been merely built to lead astray those infatuated persons who pretend to know all about the subject ('What subject?' said Jack, who was conning over these ramblings; 'naut-i-culture?'), and in reality are absolutely ignorant of the first steps of physics. Then I turned to the steward, saying, 'Bring me the common or Garden Almanack, the penny article of that ilk, for '88, for we would study it;' and I was soon made happy. . . .

During the month of July it was so exceedingly foggy, that for the first sixteen days we lived almost in a perpetual condition of haze. Although we had only five hundred miles to accomplish between the ice of Greenland and the islands of Spitzbergen, it took us about nine days to cross over, because we got becalmed: so that for three days and three nights we did not move more than a quarter of a mile, and during this time there was nothing to be seen on deck except the dismal umbrage of a vapoury sky; there was nothing to hear except an occasional drop, drop on the ceiling from the masts and rigging of the vessel; and nothing to do except pray unceasingly that a wind might come, and at any rate waft away the clouds of fog which were crowding down on us so thickly; and although there seemed little chance of our leaving this life during the time that great thickness prevailed, still, if we had succumbed, we felt sure that our souls would have found considerable difficulty in winging their way aloft while the atmosphere was thus heavily charged.

We were nine days thus without seeing anything except fog and distance. These distance days alter-

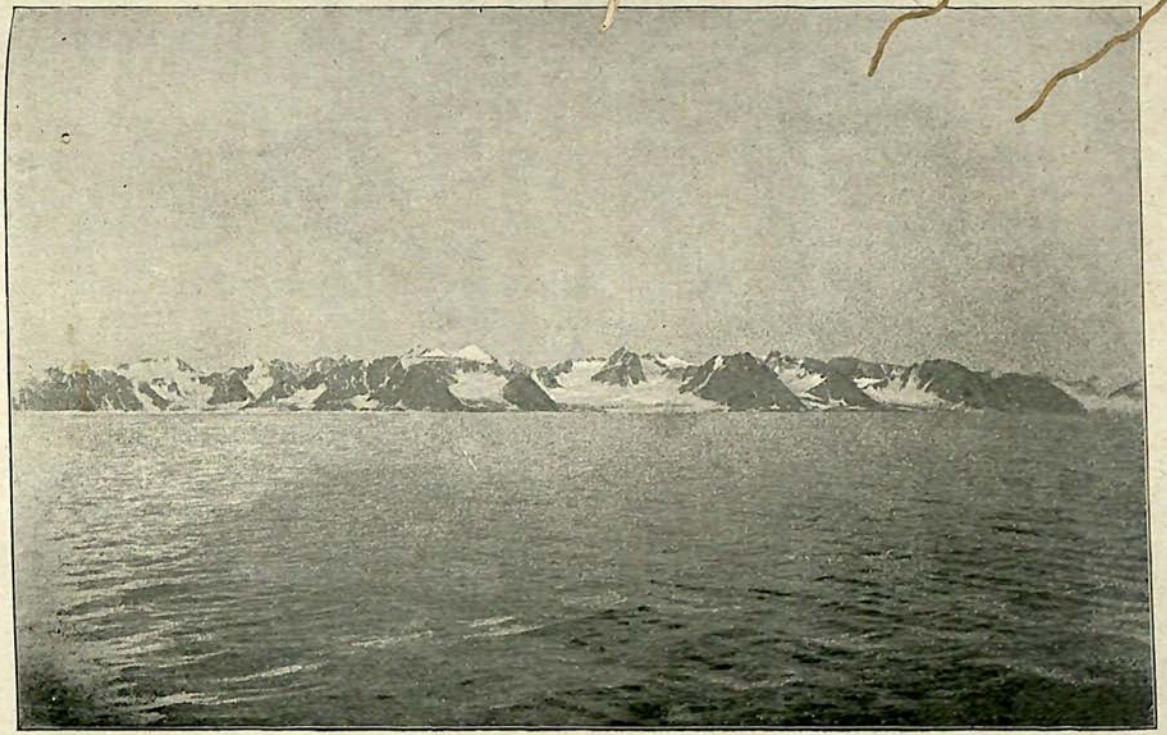
nated between quite too desolate dismality, and a treacly calm; had there been any sun it might have been a golden syrupy calm. Not a breath of wind came from any quarter to vary the monotony of our voyage, but heavy clouds of vapour hung over the ship, so that the sun could not penetrate through that hazy veil, and there was nothing to cheer our view; the distant sea down by the horizon being at times a deep cerulean blue, making a very decided line where it came in contact with the grey, clouded, gloomy sky. The sky was only light in the distance; in the more immediate foreground it seemed to be interlarded with dark clouds, behind which the sunbeams were imprisoned, and nearer the ship the reflection from above was white, the shadows on the nearer sides of the waves being the only parts which were dark, and they seemed almost black in their decided blueness, so that the colouring of the scene from aboard, although not lightened by much sunshine, was very strange and somewhat beautiful. Then, just down below, was the white foam caused by the ripple of the ship over toy waves, and that was all. Just sky and

sea, nothing else: for during the whole of that week we saw no icebergs, and, of course, no land. On the last day before sighting land a lot of sea-gulls were balanced over us, so that we knew that the sea had become less deep, and that there was something attracting them just underneath the water; also four or five Finner whales came up within two hundred yards of the ship, as compared with which our schooner looked a mere trifle. They seemed to be going along very leisurely, snorting and breathing great fountains of vapoury breath into the air.

They say that constant dropping wears a stone, and in the same way constant 'dashing' seemed to soften our steward, for after awhile he became quieter; I do not mean that his brain became softer—that would be an impossibility, it was such a feeble thing to begin with—but he was infinitely more respectful in his manners. Besides, formerly he was constantly munching something when he came to our cabins; even when he called us in the morning he used to be in the habit of clandestinely chewing a morsel of some kind. But we supposed that he was now full,

for he had entirely given it up: and we thought that if this unfortunate man had us looking after him for a few more months he would become quite a third-rate gentleman's servant.

Our steward, by way of a 'divarsion,' brought up for breakfast one morning a whitish sort of mess, in the centre of which were some square hard lumps of flesh, floating in the middle of dirty brown water; this liquid (which was gravy) was covered with a layer of grease, and on nearer inspection we saw that the mashed-up white substance was rice, and the dish was intended for curry. I have lived off nothing else but curry for months together in Ceylon, but I did not even know what this interesting species of decoction was intended to represent, and now that we had gone through our introduction to it, said, 'Let us have the delicious (but badly cooked) bacon of Wiltshire, with the garden egg, in preference to this prescription for our breakfast meal in future, Mr. Steward. It is all very well trying new dishes when you are away from here, but preserve us from being experimented on again.'



THE SEVEN SISTERS, SPITZBERGEN.

As I said before, there was a very roomy cupboard at the end of Jack's cabin, the bottom of which was filled with a quantity of things, such as boots innumerable, put in between boxes of cartridges and cartridge bags. One day I opened this cupboard, as I wanted some more oil out of the big tin for my gun. On entering I not only found the bottom of this receptacle in a most entangled mess (as it was true I expected to, for Jack has very mixed ideas about keeping articles tidy, and leaves things ensnared in the most heterogeneous labyrinth of confusion, whenever he gets in amongst them), but what was my astonishment to see every sort of bird that man's feeble intellect can possibly picture, or rather their skins, hanging there, turned inside out so that their embalmed vestments were suspended from brainless empty skulls, for the beautiful birdies themselves no longer existed. Some of them had been committed to the deep, while others had long since been consumed in pies. There were what the sailors call Looms, Dovekies, Rotches, Snowbirds, Kittiwakes, Bosens, Tat-a-rats, Burgomasters, Mollies, and many others, all dependent there on 'bark

lines' (as they are called), which means strings of thin red rope. These skins hung down all over the wooden cupboard, so that it was impossible to get into it, or see any of that useful article for which I had come, as all the air was thick with wings and alumed bodies.

When I saw this mess of feathers and dangling birdskins I could not resist some expressions of wonderment, and said, 'Where shall I find room to hang up those butterflies I thought of collecting in Spitzbergen?' Jack replied, 'I do not know, but if you wish to collect butterflies, all I can say is that there will be no room to hang your moths here.'

CHAPTER XXI

SPITZBERGEN IN THE DISTANCE

ON Thursday afternoon, July 19, we came in sight of the distant snow-covered hills and valleys of Spitzbergen. At length, after being two months and a half at sea, where nothing had been visible except the distant island of Jan Mayen, we were able to feast our eyes on this cold and desolate country, which to us seemed quite beautiful, as, although uninhabited, it was land at last. Yes, there was Spitzbergen, with its rugged mountains' feet in the water, its endless multitude of terribly cold heights rising one behind another, and its jagged precipitous rocks, all of them crowding down abruptly to the sea, so that our first introduction to these northern islands reminded us more of—— (let me see, what did it remind us of?) well, more of the back scene in a pantomime than of a real live island.

For these rocks were so black, and the snow fields coming right down to the water's edge were so awfully white, that it would be easy enough to put this picture in three colours—black, white, and blue.

It says in the chart of the islands that there are down in this sou'-westerly corner of Spitzbergen 'sunken rocks.' What is the meaning of this? Was there ever anyone foolish enough to think that rocks would float? I do not know the answer to this question, but in this age of enlightenment I am almost positive that rocks do not as a rule float. It seems an extraordinary thing that ice even should float, as it looks heavy enough, but this theory of rocks I did not believe in the least. A floating rock is at any rate so improbable that I should call it an impossibility. It is certainly ridiculous! Ahem! but to continue.

During the next twelve days we were either becalmed or else had a headwind, so that it was surpassingly dull aboard. We supposed that the charts had been only roughly put together: therefore we could not approach near enough to the land to make it even photographable. Our captain thought it

would be wiser to keep at a distance from these headlong shores, for there were so many islands just above the waves, that he feared lest there should be sunken rocks beneath them.

There were quantities of Dovekies and Looms about. The sea was so spotted with them, it looked like a plum cake all over, but we did not shoot at these birds because the captain was busy doing a thing which he had set his heart on. This was to pull down the fourteen white shining sails with which the vessel had been clothed, and put up in their stead an old set, which were infinitely more picturesque and pleasant to look at. These old sails had been blown about for more than two long years, and were quite sweet to gaze on, being all patchy and in different colours ; some of them were brown with age, and here and there were great pieces of new sailcloth put on in squares. This is one of the only advantages that a sailing ship has over a steamer. Whereas, on a steamer's deck, constant smoke and blacks are falling, on a sailing vessel the decks are perfectly clean, and it is pretty to behold the huge sails spread out, and

watch the sailors on the silent deck working constantly at them. The old sails took all the hands the whole day to hoist up, and in the evening a great fog came down, thus saving the lives of the winged fowl, which swam away from the ship advancing, and were soon engulfed in the mist.

On another night we were roaming about on the main deck about twelve o'clock, when Jack said, 'But where's the captain?' to which I replied, 'He's gone to look for the sun through that kaleidoscope of his.' Jack looked perplexed, and remarked, 'But what for?' 'Well,' I said, 'he does not know, of course, whether this is midday or midnight, and I suppose that he will be able to see with that instrument of his; for to tell you the truth I have got so mixed up that I cannot say whether this is next Thursday night or if it is last Thursday midday. Now look at the sun yourself and tell me whether yon glorious orb, which shines down here with equal force day and night, means us to go to bed right off, or if it would rather we sat up another twelve hours; for you see, amongst other trifles, the captain's chronometer has

become so confused that it does not know the difference between night and day.' Jack said that of one thing, anyway, he was certain, viz. that the last meal he had was tea, and promptly went down to turn in. But I still stopped on deck wondering—till I found that the captain had retired too, and then I thought it was time to creep up to my berth also.

We had no money aboard with us, as what would have been the good of filthy lucre? There were no shops to spend it in, as none of the icebergs stop long enough in this world to make it worth while for even a Yankee to erect a sort of store on them, and we could see no land except those rocky ranges of Prince Charles Foreland which appeared to go straight into the sea. There was, however, lying on the cobwebby shelf behind Jack's bunk a coin, which we could not but think was the British penny, although it had become so mouldy, so green, so worn and dejected from long want of use that we could scarcely recognise it. This verdant copper coin had one day disappeared from that long lonely shelf on which it used to rest, so that the board was now

abandoned and bare. Now where had that penny gone to? This is not a riddle, but merely seemed to us a question of the utmost importance which we had the greatest difficulty in solving. Our abandoned steward surely could not have taken it to spend on drinks, or was he thinking of buying a new watch? His old one cost him eleven shillings, and was constructed at Waterbury; it never lost more than half an hour a day.

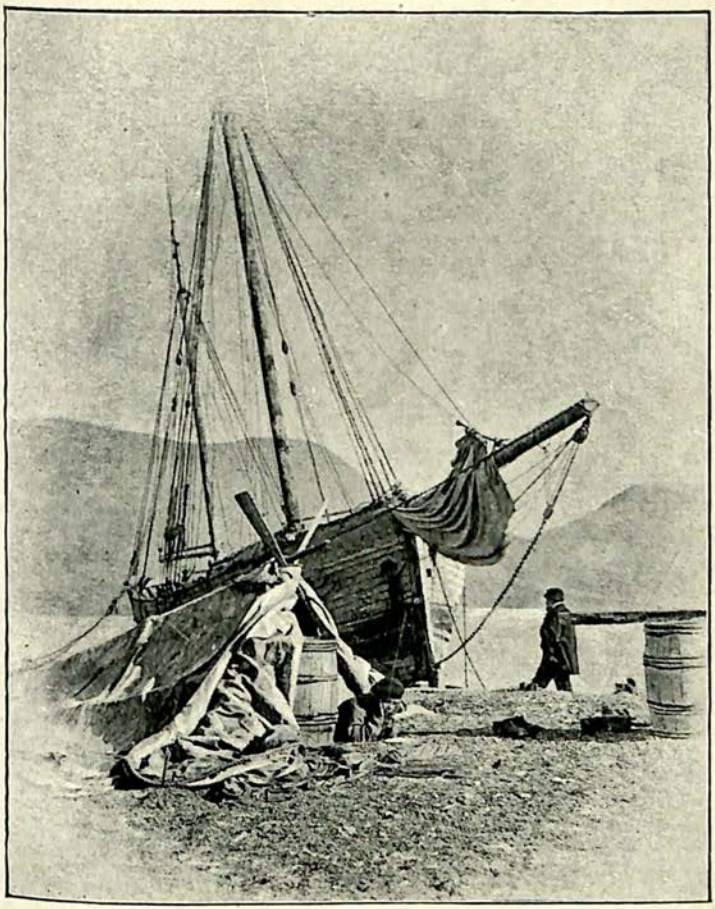
Jack thought that that penny lay hiding itself beneath the clothes in one of *my* drawers. I said let him look for it there, let him turn out all my valuables, my photograph books, in which the whole of my family are disporting themselves before drawing-room windows, and my nieces lie on beds of hay beneath the fraternal oak tree; where the cow is moving so much that only his body is visible, the rest of him being in a sort of uncertain foggy indistinctness which brings before your mind's eye moments of after-dinner thought; my toothpicks, and my now empty cigar-case, my packet of needles, my housewife, &c.—let him look through my all, my everything, and

if he finds that copper coin I will give it to him, not having anything else to bestow on one who will merit much reward. Although Jack assured me that a great time was coming, still we never found that coin again.

Only imagine, if you can, the satisfaction of getting into a climate where the fresh beef and pork will keep for *three months*. Our captain, as we said before, had the whole of one bullock and two pigs tied up to his masts before leaving Peterhead, and this meat kept perfectly good up there till July 25. Upon this day it was thought advisable to discontinue hanging our meat. So that, having been let down on deck, cut up, and salted, it was taken to some place below from whence we got good salt beef for six weeks more.

We watched the men aloft cutting down this meat; but no one can tell, and no one will ever know, what difficulty it was to us when we had to climb up those shaky rope ladders, one hundred feet, to the crow's nest. I am much too old now to begin learning a new thing which gives me altogether a fresh sensation. Any old sailor would say that only women

would have the fear that I possess about climbing up there, but consider that not only do the ladders shake horribly, but the ship's motion is fortified—no! I mean made forty times as great—by ascending to the top of those poles—as it is on deck. As for the deck of a ship I am at home there (when it is not too rough, at least), but it is a very different matter when you find yourself on a little bit of rope ladder, right away up near the sky, and nothing beneath you but, now the ship's deck, far, far below, or now the mighty ocean, as she rolls over from one side to the other, with an awful sickening sway; so that the very Mollies cry out, as they in their swift course see you nearly precipitated on to their wings. In these moments I wished myself anywhere else on this globe. I dared not look down because of the distance my person was clinging from everywhere: I could not look up, as the mast was rolling about so distractingly against the lowering sky. In fact, gazing up to the clouds, which seemed to be jerking their way first backwards and then forwards, as they ever pursue one another in their mazy onward flight, made me feel sick. So that the only thing which



THE WRECKED NORWEGIAN KETCH.

I could do was to shut my eyes, and mildly pray for the end.

One day I clung my way up to this nest, and with the utmost difficulty took a photograph of the deck. The captain very kindly aided me, bearing my camera on his back, when he looked so much like Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' that I was quite afraid lest the camera, with all its polished sides and brass fittings, should fall from its exalted position when he got to the top.

The foremast is just above the opening on deck to the galley, and there is a 'forescuttle' immediately below the foremast, through which the sailors who are standing round the galley fire can look up at persons retiring towards the crow's nest, but cannot be seen themselves, as it seems quite dark down this scuttle from up above there. One of the sailors standing by the fire, watching our upward progress, therefore said to another in a loud voice, 'They remind me of a monkey and a orgin grinder; don't they seem something like that to you, Jim?' This was exceedingly annoying, as I did not like being called a

'monkey'—in fact we both distinctly disliked it, but did not look at each other; all I could do at such a trying moment was to pretend not to have heard. As regards photography, I should recommend persons wishing to take portraits of fellow passengers and others promenading the decks to avoid this crow's nest, as when you are up there, one hundred feet above the deck, there is even on the calmest day so much oscillation, that anything except the most instantaneous movement is out of the question, and with the least motion on your part at the wrong moment you will precipitate yourself or the camera into the swirling ocean.

CHAPTER XXII

I QUARREL WITH THE CAPTAIN

WHEN we came near to the north-western corner of Spitzbergen, it seemed to be just a mass of glaciers right down to the water's edge, with here and there a rocky eminence so steep that, as Jack said, it would defy even a bird to fly up it. We think that these rocks were not more than two thousand feet high, but they seemed extraordinary black cliffs to behold, and we heard sounds exactly like far-off thunder issuing from them. It was a morning so beautiful, so fine, and so still, that the only other sounds were the calls of birds on the water, with which its blue surface was mottled all over, when there came suddenly a distant rumbling, so awful that we stood with our mouths wide open, listening to it. Then one of the sailors remarked, 'Yon's the distant glacier mashing up;' and we

realised that it was an avalanche. It was not exactly frightening to listen to, but certainly it made a grand thundering. As there was not a soul living on the land it was sure not to do any harm.

We were just off a well-surveyed bay called Smeerenburg Harbour, and we found on rising in the morning that a little Norwegian cutter had passed us while the captain was reposing below at about four o'clock A.M. The mate, whose watch it was, had not stopped the ship, because it seemed that he wanted us to get closed up in the ice all through the winter, so that his wife might have a good time at home without him. Smeerenburg Harbour is at the north-westerly corner of Spitzbergen, therefore if we could have sailed on a good many miles to the east, we should have found ourselves at North-East Land, which, being so seldom visited because of the ice packs which are generally pressed against this north coast of Spitzbergen, is, according to some of the sailors' accounts, just filled with bears and walruses. It was very doubtful, however, whether we could believe these seafaring tales, for they must be

taken as all sailors' stories should be: possibly as instructive fiction. However, it matters little, for we could not fly over the ice: as this season proved to be one of those when you could not reach that far-off land, at any rate in a sailing vessel.

No sooner had we awoke to the fact that this ship had passed us in the night watches than the captain turned the 'Traveller' round and pursued her, but the very light wind which we were suffering from soon dropped altogether, when we found ourselves about eight miles from the Norwegian. The captain therefore ordered one of the whaleboats to be lowered, and set out to pull to the ship, taking Jack with him and five sailors. This cutter was the 'Hannah' of Tromso, and a very small 'Hannah' she was, of about twenty-five tons register only.

I will try and give some idea of the little ship, as it is extraordinary in what apparent cockleshells the Norwegians will go out on the ocean; yes, and will go so very far from home, out in this cold world, away from Mother Norway's sheltering wing.

When our captain had rowed alongside, he said

it seemed like stepping down to get aboard out of our rowing boat, as she had scarcely any bulwarks, and was only just out of the water. She was painted very smartly, black with a yellow rim all round outside, so that when you got far enough off to see this outside you were fairly *dazzled.* There were three men aboard, viz. the captain, the cook, and the sailor bold; also two clean flannel shirts were hanging before her bowsprit to dry. We presume these did not belong to the sailor, as the sailor appeared not to have brought a change of shirts with him; but we shall never know rightly if this sailor was expected to change his shirt for Sundays or not. The skipper of this vessel did not ask Jack and the captain to descend into his saloon, for the simple reason that there would not have been room for them all three at once, but I believe he brought an old and very dirty chart up on deck; where he unfolded it, and most kindly told them everything that he could in the Norwegian tongue. Do not suppose that either Jack or the captain understood a word of this foreign lingo; but by pointing to the chart and continually using

the word 'good,' which is the same in both languages, and by shaking his head when he meant 'bad,' we gained the following information from him. That it would be impossible to get to that North-East Land this summer, as the northerly wind which had been blowing for so long had kept the ice down on the northern shore of Spitzbergen; that we could get a run ashore if we anchored in Icefiord, but he was afraid that we should not get much sport, as there were so many Norwegian ships at Spitzbergen this year.

On the way back to the 'Traveller' Jack shot at several birds that obstructed their course, and killed seven Rotges, four Black Guillemots, two Brünnich Guillemots, and one Arctic Puffin.

Before leaving the mouth of Smeerenburg Harbour, I had 'words' (as we used to say long years ago, in the nursery) with our captain. It seemed that this harbour had two entrances; the main one was round on the north-westerly coast of the island, and the other was a few miles down the western side, so that it formed a long mountainous island on this western

side. The captain said that we had got round this nor'-westerly corner of the island, and were opposite the larger entrance—and I said we had *not*. 'And, my dear captain, I ought to know, for although I have never had the advantage of being in these parts before, still I look at the chart as well as you, and can see that you have to go round the northernmost corner of Spitzbergen before arriving at the large mouth of the harbour. But instead of even listening to me, you who have never been absolutely into this harbour, and have not been round any northern points at all, declare that this is the entrance; you think you will impose upon me because you have spent a year or two on the sea gathering cryolith from Greenland, which you say is stuff that they make baking powder out of. Now let me tell you that I have also been at sea for —let me see—how long? Why, three months, and in fact was at sea a time or two before, when I was sick, but now I am not so any longer; and look here, captain, do you want to fight? Because, if you do, we can make a ring; for of all the fellows to talk that I ever met,' &c.

I was walking with the captain one of these beautiful evenings up and down on deck, and a little Norwegian ketch was lying in the 'offing' (wherever that place may be, but we were told by the captain that it was lying 'right there,' so it must be true); anyway, she looked a painted ship upon a painted sea, for the mist was just clearing off her bows; thus she came out so stilly and quietly into the evening sunshine, that I thought at first she was merely some image stealing on my fancy, till I presently noticed she was our little Norwegian 'Hannah.' No sound rent that clear evening air, and the distant snow-covered mountains seemed bathed in sunshine from the perfect fineness of the atmosphere; the distance being so clear, that we could see a mountain which we calculated must be eighty miles away from the ship. A sort of weary cawing came from the Dovekies (or Black Guillemots), admonishing their young ones, and teaching them how to dive. It came in such a charming way that I could not help being affected by it, and said to the captain, 'The calling of yonder ducks reminds me somehow of home, and brings back in memory many a day when

in childhood's happy hour I have culled the shining buttercup'—— The captain here interrupted me, 'Yes, it sounds like frogs.' I was so discomposed by this rude remark that I went below immediately, where I sat despondently alone, and thought a great deal about many things for a long time by myself. If the captain takes nature's most charming sounds in this light, mixing up the glorious freedom of this dark, deep blue ocean, with the dismal muddiness of a dirty farmyard pond, to what sort of depth would he go if he heard the owls hooting forth their nocturnal serenades from the churchyard of my home, or what indeed would he say to the God-forbidding, unearthly howling of coyotes on a lone night in one of those wildernesses, the prairies of America? Surely such a sound would not call forth the common-places of his practical mind, as there is no cry in this world more truly dismal, more awfully desolate, more akin to the supposed lamentations of lost souls in Purgatory, than the nocturnal yelling of a coyote, the most dispiriting sound that has ever been borne to my ears?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE POLAR BEAR

ON July 31 we had a desperate assault and brutal struggle with that most carnivorous animal, that incarnation of sin, the 'Polar Bear.' This polar bear in his native haunts is a huge brute, as he has not only the ordinary carcage (as Mrs. Brown calls it) of the everyday polar bear of menageries and such like, but in addition to being at this season as fat as butter, possesses also under his skin no less than four inches of blubber all over ; which is more than, I suppose, those bears which I have seen in the Zoological Gardens at home can possibly accumulate, in spite of their being fed with buns all day long.

It was about 2.30 on the morning of the 31st that we were awakened by the captain, who came into the cabin saying, 'Mr. Jack, there is a bear.'

In about one minute from that time Jack had put on some cloth clothes over his pyjamas which were sticking out from beneath his Norfolk jacket, had seized his rifle and a few cartridges, and had run on deck. There was the bear swimming ever so slowly across the 'starn' of our ship towards the island of Spitzbergen, which must have been about twelve miles away, and coming from the ice, which we thought could not have been a shorter distance than ten miles. These animals progress at the slowest pace on a long journey, and this one had evidently intended to go altogether about twenty-two miles, if he had succeeded in reaching the shore. It seemed a bit of good luck our having seen him, as we were travelling through a great fog, which was so obscure that we could not see more than two hundred yards away from the ship. The first mate, who had been on watch, had detected the bear, and immediately came down to the cabin for a rifle, without saying a word to us or rousing the captain. But before the mate had got well away from the ship, in fact before he had done more than blow his nose and fix a cartridge

in his gun ready to fire, the captain came on deck—having been aroused by the noise of lowering the boat—and commanded him to wait awhile ere he let off his rifle in the wanton way that he seemed inclined to do. Then the captain with Jack descended into one of the whaleboats, and went in pursuit of the bear. The poor brute, after eating so many seals that it could not swim any pace, was surrounded by two boats: and Jack (when they were quite close to it) planted a shot which penetrated just behind the head and killed him at once. And if this is what they call 'sport,' then may Heaven forefend us from arctic sport in future, for how could the unfortunate swimming beast retaliate or get away, being quite encompassed by two men with rifles in two boats, so that he was completely at their mercy, as he seemed quite out of breath, and had not even the chance of saying 'boo' to those geese?

Then they towed him home; there being no difficulty about this, as a fat polar bear does not sink. He weighed so much that seven men hauling over two double 'tackles' could only just lift him on

deck. Then we turned in again, while four sailors were left on deck to skin and clean him. His pelt was attached to a long rope and thrown overboard to cleanse itself with salt water, while his jaws and head were put in a bucket on deck for Jack to see after. He possessed one of the finest summer coats that our captain ever saw.

I believe that these animals live altogether off seals, which they catch sometimes in the water by submerging themselves almost entirely except the eyes and the nose, and thus swimming in pursuit; and sometimes on the ice. We were told that to see them 'sloping' along this frozen surface in pursuit of their prey is a ghastly sight to be remembered. This spectacle of the bear abjectly crouching, while he draws nearer and nearer to the unfortunate animal on whom he means to pounce, which is lying there quite unconscious of his presence, is too horrible for contemplation, as it reminds one so terribly of fairy tales or allegories of one's childhood. In this case the poor little seal, or the mother with her beautiful eyes (they are quite magnificent compared with the

bear's little bits of black things), is thus leapt on, and devoured by the huge, crouching, unwieldy monster. I believe that he does all the finding his food by scent, and then steals on the seals unawares.

A few days after this, Jack brought into our drawing-room, with the utmost care, those huge jaw-bones of the bear, which had been boiled for some hours till the flesh was dropping off them. These he deposited with the most extreme tenderness on a large bit of sailcloth in the middle of the table. Then he looked round to me and said, with passing civility, 'This meat has been boiled, if you feel hungry and would like to try some.' After this he set to work, and for four mortal hours was scraping the thus boiled flesh off the skull, till he got it quite clean; when, fortunately, this skull was so reduced that it did not even smell of bear. The skin, having been put into a mixture of salt, alum, and water, was left there for a fortnight.

The 'Walrus' rather amused us on the night we shot that Bruin, as he seemed to have tried to haul the beast out of the water by catching hold of his fur.

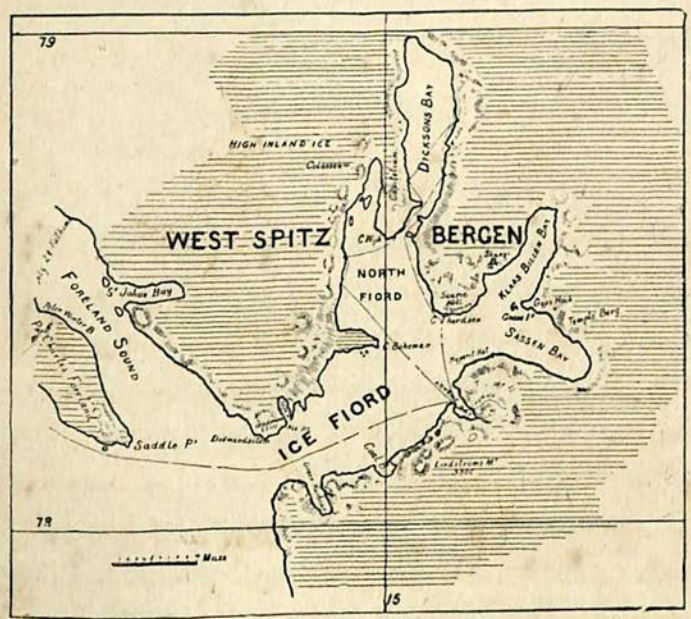
You might just as well try to lift up a field by the grass which grows on it, as try to lift one of these beasts out of the water by his coat. However, the Walrus became very much annoyed by the hairs coming out in his palm, and gave way to the following intellectual remark: 'Well, I suppose if you caught an angel, you would find the thing was moulting, and that all the feathers were coming out of her, but I did reckon that this beast was a little more solid.'

CHAPTER XXIV

REINDEER

WE now made southwards again to an inlet called Icefiord, and, when we had reached it, we sailed about forty miles up, away from the main sea, and eventually anchored in a sort of harbour called Advent Bay, alongside a little Norwegian cutter with whose captain we made great friends. This fiord, which to the southwards was formed of snow-covered mountains, was, on the north shore, just a mass of most appalling glaciers, which extended almost without intermission right along the sea-coast for a matter of twenty or twenty-two miles, and then were carried back into the far distance. Glaciers, with here and there a black-looking unclimbable rock, protruding a thousand feet into the air from out of their bed. In fact, Spitz-

bergen seems to be one large tract of mountainous snow-covered heights, planted in a bed of glaciers. The dark forbidding-looking rocks rise up as if they



THE MAP OF ICE FIORD

had expected to pierce through the unlimited blue of the heavens, but forgetting the password used for letting sinners in, had remained in this cold and frosty atmosphere, surrounded by ice and snow, in their

gaunt and grim fashion, pointing ever skywards from one generation to another.

We were now in the midst of these desolate hills: for surely they are solitary: without one living soul; without one morsel of growing stuff more than five inches high upon the dreary shore?

It is true there was moss; and on the side of the fiord where our schooner was lying, plenty of lichens might be found, which, on a level with the sea, gave the land a sort of yellowy appearance: and what lovely colours could be found a little way higher up on a rising plateau which showed signs of formerly being beach, but was now out of reach of the blue sea waters. It was all covered with masses of stonecrop, the brightest of light yellows in patches, together with great clusters of the most brilliant orange. Here and there the stones were covered with a sort of light green, encircled by different shades of dark, dark blue moss, and many of these stones were themselves of the deepest red, on whose tops were growing quantities of flowers of a sere autumnal magenta, the whole making a very varied picture in colouring. Beyond this

imagine one of the only tufts of grass that we found anywhere on the coast of Spitzbergen, and then the sea: the sea, here ruffled by some passing scud, while yonder it was quite placid; with the distant glistening glacier ice perfectly reflected in the still, deep waters of this northern fiord. Then further off were the dark blue mountain heights, and high up above this was the midnight sun.

Talking of the sun, the skipper of the little Norwegian cutter which lay alongside us, said to the captain one day, 'Can you kindly tell me the time, as you see we do not keep it correctly up here?' Our captain looked at his watch, and said it is just half-past twelve. So the Norwegian seemed to think for a moment, and then he said, 'Do you mean half-past twelve at night or half-past twelve in the day?' which shows how in this country even a skipper may be at sea. This Norwegian had an oldish and very weatherbeaten face, and was, according to our way of thinking, a first-rate old tar.

One evening he came aboard to see a photograph

that I had taken of his ship, and at first he was very nervous, so we offered him champagne to steady him a bit. He could speak about ten words of English and said, after thinking for a moment, 'But champagne—what is that?' We told him that it was a British drink made out of gooseberries, but how they put air into it we did not know—most likely in the same way as they inflated soda water. He thought when he first poured it out, that it was a rather inflated species of what the Norwegians call 'ol.' Then, having taken up his glass, he looked through it—presently tasted it—and then put it down again as though he did not like it—simply grunting internally. What the meaning of those stomachic sounds was, we could not tell; all we knew was that he did not finish his tumbler till it was time to be going, when doubtless thinking that we were all looking at him he absorbed it, just as we should assimilate a Seidlitz powder. Jack offered him a cigar, which he took and lit, but was listening so intently to our questionings, that it was soon forgotten and allowed to go out; then he lit it again, and it forthwith expired

a second time. We lighted up that cigar four times, but on each occasion it went out; so then we gave it up as a bad job, for listening to our questions and thinking up English answers was as much as he could do at one time.

Spitzbergen is a wonderful country for reindeer, at least so we were told. Such quantities are killed there every year by the Norwegians, that one can scarcely believe it possible that they are all strictly Spitzbergen deer; one is led to suppose that there must be other countries, north or east of Spitzbergen, all connected in the winter time by the ice which prevails up there. For instance, this year we were told that there were forty Norwegian ships round Spitzbergen. This word 'ships,' I think, meant anything from ten to sixty tons register, but they without doubt intended to come back to Norway half, or at any rate a quarter laden with reindeer meat. They also collect innumerable other things off the coast, such as Floe seals, Eider ducks' eggs and nests, White whales, and Sharks. Besides, if the season should be favourable, there are walruses and polar bears. But still, if it were true that this year there were so many

sail around these islands, some of them must certainly (one would think) have returned nearly empty.

When we arrived it was late in the summer, and the deer had therefore been all driven back by these Norsk hunters far from the coast, so that to get any of them a long and weary walk must first be taken.

Our third day, after dropping anchor in the bay, we both went forth on the stalk. The distant cliffs which looked so black and forbidding on our southern side of the fiord, with their water-washed, snow-bedrenched sides, were, when you approached nearer to their precipitous crags, altogether covered with loose stones; and with their jagged tops on either side of you were quite unclimbable: but it was possible to wander away up the valleys, keeping near the foaming torrent which rushed headlong down the low ground, between the two crests of hills, from the melting glacier above. Therefore when we had pulled about five miles away from our ship, and crossed to the further side of the bay, I parted company with Jack, who meant to walk up a valley in a different direction to the one which I took. So we both started off to penetrate inland, with three sailors to carry our food and blankets to sleep in.

I will try and give you some idea of my walk after reindeer that day. When I had trudged about seven miles up the summer-scorched valley, two of the sailors, having deposited our rugs, went back homewards, leaving me with my remaining sailor alone on the mountain side. It was very hot inland; the thermometer registered about seventy on the sunny side of the valley, and everything glowed where we perspired along in the sleepy sunshine. We seemed to wander on beneath the sun's rays the whole afternoon, until eleven o'clock at night, when we spread our rugs and lay down to rest; then the sun immediately left our side of the hills in deep shadow, so that we found it too chilly for sleep. When we had lain recumbent for about two hours, we started off walking again on what I thought the most hopelessly hopeless tramp that ever a man was foolishly led into. There were at least ten miles over glaciers to be accomplished first, not the common glacier, but for a great distance it was the worst sort that they make. Not merely up hill and down dale, but up the steepest precipices on the ice; where it was necessary to take step after step, cutting the floor away to make a foot

place ; where any moment one might be precipitated down so far, that I saw life in such a country was not worth a cent ; and then down again, now over a furlong or two of slippery ice surface and then plodding away over *miles and miles* of watery snow. The harmless sun, too, which had hitherto been an orb provoking laughter from the powerlessness of its rays, suddenly seemed to gain power ; yes, an awful scorching power ; for indeed it seemed to burn our very souls, as we wandered over those white and glistening fields of ice. There were thousands of acres of deep hard ice all rolling ever downwards : with just the ridges of the mountains standing out of it, in some places where they came up too peaked, or too much the shape of a knife blade, to allow of any snow resting on their exalted heights : till at length we got over the mountain fastnesses to a valley in the bottom of which this powerful sun had melted up all the ice, and between two hills we came to the end of the glacier, finding ourselves at last once more on moss-covered ground.

It was now six o'clock in the morning ; we had been walking, since midnight ; so sitting down beneath the

shadow of a cliff formed there by the washing away of the glacier stream, we ate any quantity of biscuits, butter, and pork, which we had brought with us for the occasion.

I must say a word about this sailor man 'Georgy,' who on this trip was my companion. What a ridiculous name Georgy is, from our English point of view, for a full-grown man. However, when you have got used to that, think of him as he was, viz. a red-bearded, full-grown Scotchman, standing six foot high; he was thirty years of age, and the possessor of a strong-minded and talkative little missis at home, who was only waiting for his return to Peterhead to worry his life out, and make him wish to go to sea again. He was a remarkably silent man, who looked pleasant, not intentionally but naturally, and was as good a hand at descrying the objects of the chase as I would wish to meet; in fact this taciturn sailoring fellow could detect seals on the ice at a much greater distance than I could even with my field glasses. There are some who would say this was because my field glasses were in a dirty condition; well, this ought not to have been

the case, as I was constantly rubbing their shining lenses, and although I know that glutinous seal oil is not at all transparent, still, though my clothes might be covered with this substance, my fingers and handkerchiefs were not always in the same mess. And in like manner Georgy could find out the whereabouts of a reindeer long before I had got sufficient foothold amongst the rocks to steady myself for a look round, and I think that he could see one of these deer advancing over a mountain long before it had got there, when it was in fact coming up the opposite sloping hill side. There is nothing like having a rooted belief in your stalker's power of vision, and I had that at any rate in mine.

Then we started away to look for reindeer; and had not gone more than a quarter of a mile, when the faithful Georgy touched my arm, saying in a whisper, 'There!' It was a three-year-old buck feeding by itself, which we promptly stalked, and I slew with one shot. His horns were in velvet, and therefore quite soft and useless, but we skinned him with the tenderest care, to preserve as a trophy of the chase;

and wrapping up in this skin his two hind quarters and kidneys, we left them on the top of some rising ground, and proceeded down the valley.

As I think I said before, there is no wood so far north as Spitzbergen, so that there should be no difficulty in walking when you get away from the snow. This valley seemed particularly good going, or perhaps it was merely in contradistinction to progressing on the glacier and the disturbed hills of shingle which we found for pretty nearly a mile after leaving the ice behind.

It is a difficult thing to resist temptation; I was tempted and gave way, for we had not walked more than a mile and a half further down the vale, when we saw another deer. Now what could be the use of another dead body to us, as we had already more meat than we could carry back that twenty miles to the ship. Well, Georgy said perhaps the sailors on the Norwegian cutter might like to come for it if we told them where it was. So I decided that if I could get a good shot I would have it. I thought that the skin would be very jolly to bring

home: reindeers' kidneys also are the best form of food that God has given to we sinful men to eat in this shallow world. So, with these things in my mind, I crept forward and got nearer, till I was lying down not more than a hundred and twenty yards from him. Then the reindeer advanced a few yards, and before you could say 'Knife' he was dead, or very nearly so, as I put an express bullet in his back-bone. We built these two reindeer up, each one under a heap of stones, to keep the foxes from them; and putting a high stone indicator over each, left them there, having done all that was possible to preserve their bodies from these scavengers, and began our homeward journey. It would be difficult to tell all that we suffered while returning over the nine or ten miles of glacier. I do not think that there is harder work in this world, or anything more heartrending, than following your tracks backwards over a long uphill piece of ice, particularly when you are burdened with a weight on your back. I shall never laugh at the power of the arctic sun again, as on its glaciers it is all-powerful, and on this August

day, without a breath of wind to refresh one, we felt like melting.

At length the seventeen miles were accomplished, and we found ourselves down by the side of the sea, where a cold fog was being blown in and obliterating the sunlight. There we fired off a gun three times, which was the preconcerted signal for a boat to come and fetch us, and I saw through the glasses one of the whaleboats was lowered away and coming towards us. Thus ended a good sporting day's walking. We had been on the tramp for *seventeen* hours, having left the camp we made up on the mountain at a quarter to one in the night, and getting back to *the fiord* at six thirty in the evening.

I was more fortunate than Jack had been on the expedition. After a walk of thirteen hours, when he also got two deer, he came back wet through, as he had found it necessary to cross several glacier torrents. He therefore came down to the fiord with his feet quite soaked, and fired off his gun ; but through some misunderstanding with the captain, there was no boat sent out for him, and no answering shot.

Although the ship was three miles off across the fiord, still it looked so close through his glass that he felt what a pity it was that he could not fire a shot through his telescope, as that brought him so near in spirit and in view to his home. When he had expended all his cartridges in vain, and looked through his glass till he was tired, he began to get terribly cold, as the fog had been down on the fiord all the day, and a fog is always exceedingly chilly. There was a small Norwegian ship away about three miles up the harbour, and not more than one mile from the shore. Therefore Jack went up alongside her, and hallooed till he could not shout any more.

What weary work it is waiting on the cold sea-beach, where there is absolutely no place to find shelter behind; what wretched work it is waiting for six long hours, with no consolation at hand, and the damp mists coming up in gusts which make you shiver, as they seem to get under your very skin and freeze the life out of you. Yet this was Jack's plight. At length, after hanging about for six and a half hours, the only Norwegian aboard that vessel awoke, and

putting a boat out for him, took him over to the 'Traveller'

When I came aboard about seven hours later Jack was shivering all over and we thought that he was in for a *fever*.

All the next day he only grew worse, and could eat nothing. The only thing which divided us, was what remedy we should try. The captain said pills, the steward thought his favourite chlorodyne was the only thing, and I sharpened my razor in the cabin to bleed him; but at the same time we were not sure that some castor oil given in the palm of the hand, as I used to give it to the niggers in Ceylon, was not the thing which his malady required. After a lengthy discussion, it ended in our giving him nothing, for we wisely thought that we all were so clever at doctoring, we had better wait and see if the distemper would not show itself before we administered a potion. However, as we had no doctor with us and did not give him anything ourselves, Jack thought better of it, said that there was a good time coming, and wisely recovered on the third day.

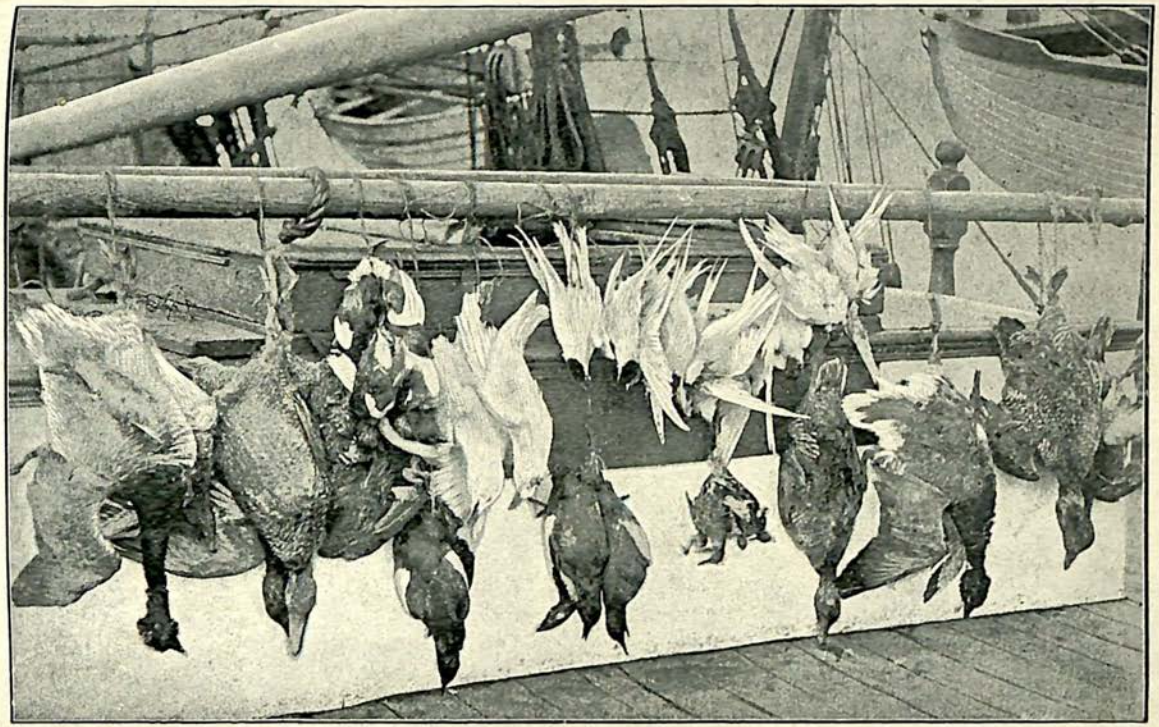
About Jack's two deer. He seemed to have found some difficulty in negotiating with them, as he said, 'You see they are so shy and my rifle will not be held straight, or stop straight; it seemed to have a sort of upside down way with it, that became quite distressing when I wanted to shoot it off.' However, he killed all he saw, which were two, and left them in a place from which they were dug out by the Norwegian who had rowed him shipwards in his boat, to whom he gave the spoils of his chase.

CHAPTER XXV

SHARKS

THE Norwegians were repairing a wrecked schooner which had been beached here about a year ago. The picture opposite represents the wreck. It is not such a forlorn-looking object as a stranded vessel generally is, as it retained some of its ropes and masts ; or else they had put fresh ones on, in place of the old. It is difficult to tell the difference between old and new at a glance on these Norwegian ships, as they seem to be all equally weatherbeaten. Close beside this, there lay a really wrecked hull, which had been there some years, and we do not know anything more picturesque or quaint than such an old hull looked, lying on the sandy shore, with the high mountains behind it, and a little rippling stream running into the sea close at hand.

BIRDS SHOT ON ICE FIORD.

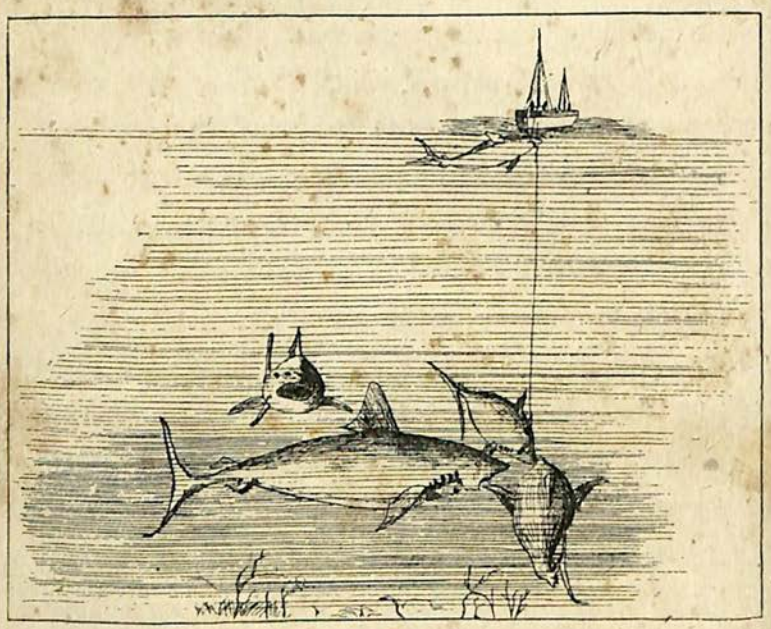


BRENT GOOSE. EIDER DUCKS. LITTLE AWKS. KITTIWAKES. BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOTS. ARCTIC TERNS. SAND PIPERS. BRENT GOOSE. EIDER DUCKS.

The beach was covered with rolled-up sealskins, and the skins of defunct birdies, also old barrels which the honest Norwegian uses on his deck to stow everything away in; they were stores which would be returned aboard the ship again when she was ready for sea. Some of these were full of salted reindeer meat, some contained eider-down, gathered from these birds' nests; others had birds' skins of every sort, which are valuable merely for their feathers, and some of the casks were full of seal oil or white-whale oil—this latter being a very small whale, which they entrap with nets in Bell Sound, the next fiord to Icefiord in Spitzbergen. Everything that you can think of comes in useful to these hardy Norsemen, and nothing on which a penny can be turned is thrown away. Besides all this, the scene was rendered more beautiful by a couple of old binnacles lying there, and a tent made out of a worn sail supported on oars, in which a boy apparently lived, and slept away his time when nothing else was going on.

The Norwegians seemed to have no computation of time up in the arctic summer. They would just

work till they were tired out, sometimes for twenty hours at a stretch, and then go to bed for a while until they were rested. There were three or four



SHARK FISHING

men working at the wreck, putting together the lost pieces, and hoisting new sails in place of the old ones, which, we gathered, were blown to smithereens during the gale when she was lost. We had the fascination

of seeing this vessel when she was fairly out to sea again, shark-fishing off Icefiord.

They captivate these Greenland sharks simply for the sake of their livers. I have heard of fellows being caught for their money, and there are plenty of young ladies at home who will captivate a young man for their heart's sake. I have also heard of a youthful and irreligious man who said, 'Do for Heaven's sake let me catch this flea first, and then I'll attend to you.' But I have never, never before heard of civilised men going out in a boat, with lots of stale meat aboard of it, simply that they may bait their hooks and try and entangle sharks for their livers' sake. These livers are very large ; the whole interior of the fish—as far as we can make out from the sailors who tell us about such things—is filled with nothing but liver. They are stupid sluggish brutes, which indeed we should be, were our livers in like condition ; but unlike our sharks in tropical waters, these fish live at the bottom of the sea, and are called by the sailors 'blind sharks,' so that the Norwegians have to sit in their boats dangling a line two hundred yards (one hundred fathoms)

beneath them.[1] Why, it was bad enough fishing for tench, where we had to sink our hooks about five feet, but imagine the trouble it must be, when you get a bite and have to haul up six hundred feet of line before seeing whether your bait is all right or no. Then they must certainly get a good price for the shark's interior, or they would not find this sort of amusement pay. I believe that when they do catch a fish it is generally about ten or twelve feet long,[2] and is possessed of a liver six feet in length, which yields no less than twenty-five gallons of oil. What this oil can be used for we wondered muchly, unless they mix it—when refined—with cod-liver oil for invalids? Have you ever heard of shark-liver oil? I never have.

[1] They do descend as far as 300 fathoms beneath the surface of the sea, and I understand have been caught at this depth.

[2] A Greenland shark has been caught twenty-five feet long.

THE WESTERN SHORE OF DICKSON'S BAY.

CHAPTER XXVI

AMONGST THE FIORDS

ON August 9 we started on a four days' boat cruise, right across the main fiord, which we calculated must be twenty-one miles from Advent Bay, where we were anchored, to the opposite side of North Fiord (see map, p. 198), from which we proposed rowing right up to the top of Dickson's Bay, a distance of about forty-eight miles, thus making a tour of nearly a hundred miles altogether. This trip was made because we had been told that it was a wonderful country for *bears*, and Jack languished to meet the polar bear in open ground, and see who would scramble off first (no! my pen is running away with me)—I mean, and see whether his rifle would not settle the beast before the beast settled him. But we regret to say that disappointment followed even these efforts, as the far-

famed polar bear does not exist thereabouts, neither did we see one spot where he had left his footprints, which was the more extraordinary as we had heard so much talk of the facility with which even strangers could become acquainted with this interesting animal, that we expected to see him, anyway, 'frisking around' in the distance.

We took with us four men to row our boat and one to steer, and in the way of provisions there were eight six-pound tins of Australian beef, which, if we fell short of our duty towards, at any rate the sailors stowed away as much as it was possible to eat in four days. What first-rate beef that was, and what marvellous appetites we had! but in spite of this we returned with four of our tins untouched. Then there were enough biscuits to last a week, and for the passengers on this expedition, there were one dozen eider ducks' eggs collected by the captain of the Norwegian cutter and presented to us. They are very large, about double the size of an ordinary fowl's egg, and forty times as 'strong'—or I should say as 'nutritious'—so that even when on an expedition like

the present, we could not manage to dispose of more than one at a sitting. The men also took a cask full of drinking water of a very doubtful sort. We found that this liquid did not retain its pristine flavour when it had been in a newly cemented ship's tank more than three months, and its smell was enough to make one stagger. The taste was something like that of very strong and stale rhubarb and magnesia, so that we were glad to cast it on one side, and, having washed out the barrel, refill it from the rippling mountain torrent.

It is quite foolish to think that in starting on an expedition like the one I am trying to describe you will take everything that is necessary. I regret to say that an absence of the ground coffee-berry was what we chiefly lacked, but we enjoyed just enough of this powdery material to give our beverage a slight colour. Drinking sugar and water hot is at any rate conducive to health, and does not lead on to bad ways, as other stimulating drinks too often do; so we had nothing to complain of. A bag of coals which we took with us was quite useless, for there was a large quantity of

timber cast up on these shores, having been driven by arctic currents, probably from some river like the Obi or Petchora on Russian soil, all these hundreds of miles westward across the Barent's Seas. Some of the timber must have been years old, for not only had it come a very long and stormy distance on this arctic current, but pieces were cast up on the land yards above where we should imagine that any spring tide would flow. Many of these had not been uselessly stranded, as they had, after travelling so many weary miles, helped to heat our ground coffee-berry.

The first day we rowed about thirty miles across the main fiord, then all along North Fiord into Dickson's Bay. The mountainous ranges which rose on either side of us were wonderfully pretty. On our left hand were spotlessly white glacier-clad valleys and dark rocky mountain peaks standing up aloft; and on the other side nothing but curiously shaped unclimbably steep hills, freshly worn with the snow and water which had come rushing down their sides, carrying every year multitudes of stones and rocks in

their precipitous fall, and showing the horizontal strata of slate, and sometimes broad black lines of coal, of which we supposed they were formed. Down below near the sea level the eye was arrested by huge patches of yellow-coloured moss, some of which were covered with little bits of pinky flowers, each one coming up on its own stem, about half an inch from its mother moss. These pretty, scentless blossoms were the only sort of flower that we saw in Spitzbergen, but there probably had been many more, which were over because of the lateness of the season. In fact, lichens and moss seem to be the only vegetation growing on the island, except those few blades of grass which we saw near the ship. This was a very interesting fact, and one that should be remembered by every northern traveller, that the garden weed is not only found to flourish extensively, I may say vigorously, in every garden pathway of England, but it may be detected as far north as latitude 78, for we found no less than six roots of this interesting growth of herbage.

Upon the central promontory of land, in the main Icefiord, a company was started to work the minerals

some years ago, but finding the summer so short and the winter—when the ground was covered with snow some feet thick—so long, they realised that it did not pay them ; and the Norwegian government—wanting a place on Spitzbergen where they could put stores in case of shipwreck, or sailors having their boats frozen in the ice (which occurs I believe very often)—bought the huts put up by the mining company for a trifle and made this their reserve.

One Norwegian skipper, however, thought that he would have a high old time, so left his home early in the spring, taking next to no provisions with him, and on his arrival at Icefiord broke open the government store, and did enjoy himself for the rest of the cruise immensely, living on what the Norwegian government had provided for the ship-ridden (word invented for the occasion) crews ; but revenge came at last, for the stores were eventually played out, and then it was necessary to return to his native shores. Whereupon he was promptly put in his native prison, where he languished in durance vile for many years, and the government have placed

their stores much farther north ever since, at a part of the island named Mossel Bay, where the ordinary Norwegian yachts (as they are called) do not go.

The waters of the fiord were just swarming with birds, who were so unaccustomed to man and his avenging gun, that in many cases we could have knocked them down with an oar. An Arctic puffin that we came across, was very nearly killed because it would not get out of our way; one of our boatmen almost chopping it in two, unintentionally, with his oar.

The Brent geese were the most difficult to approach, and unless they had young ones with them, or we could come on them unexpectedly over a promontory, they were very hard to get a shot at. They, for some reason, had not the confidence in man which one would expect from this sort of bird; even when they had flown a quarter of a mile away from the pursuer, there was something that was not altogether handsome or confiding in the way that they looked round, evidently to see if the man with the shooting iron was following. There was a certain nervousness about their deportment which I could not admire.

The birds were not collected by us so much for food as because Jack wished to stuff them; it is true that we did stuff some of them on the voyage, but Jack wished to preserve their skins when he got home. The white birdies in the middle of the picture opposite are Pectorals. They are huge-winged creatures; and give tongue as loudly as almost any sea bird, but their bodies are most minute. They frightened us a good deal at one promontory where we stopped, for two of these white-winged demons had either been concealing eggs beneath the moss on that mountain side, or for some other unknown reason they made themselves more objectionable than it is possible for gulls to become in our land of civilisation. Not only did they scream at the top of their voices all round us, but you might have supposed that Satan himself possessed them, for they kept flying right down and *pecking at the caps on our heads.* This is a fact, although it sounds untrue; so that we had to keep them off with our hands for fear of losing our headgear.

There is one little bird in this picture which was quite delicious for eating; we think that it is a

sort of sandpiper. We only got four or five of them; would that we had seen more, as it is such a nice sensible little fowl that we must say how it behaved, so that others may at any rate follow its example. It was not in the least shy of strangers; there was not a grain of shyness in its composition. When it was washing itself in a small brook—which only babbled faintly because of the sunlight which consumed it—or digging about for provisions in the marshy ground surrounding the streamlet, then you could walk right up; and if you shot its sister dead at its side, this bird did not care two straws, but just gave a bit of a flutter with its wings and went on pecking about as if nothing had happened, waiting patiently till its turn came. In fact, this was a most satisfactory bird, and I repeat that we wished there were more of them.

CHAPTER XXVII

STILL AMONGST THE FIORDS

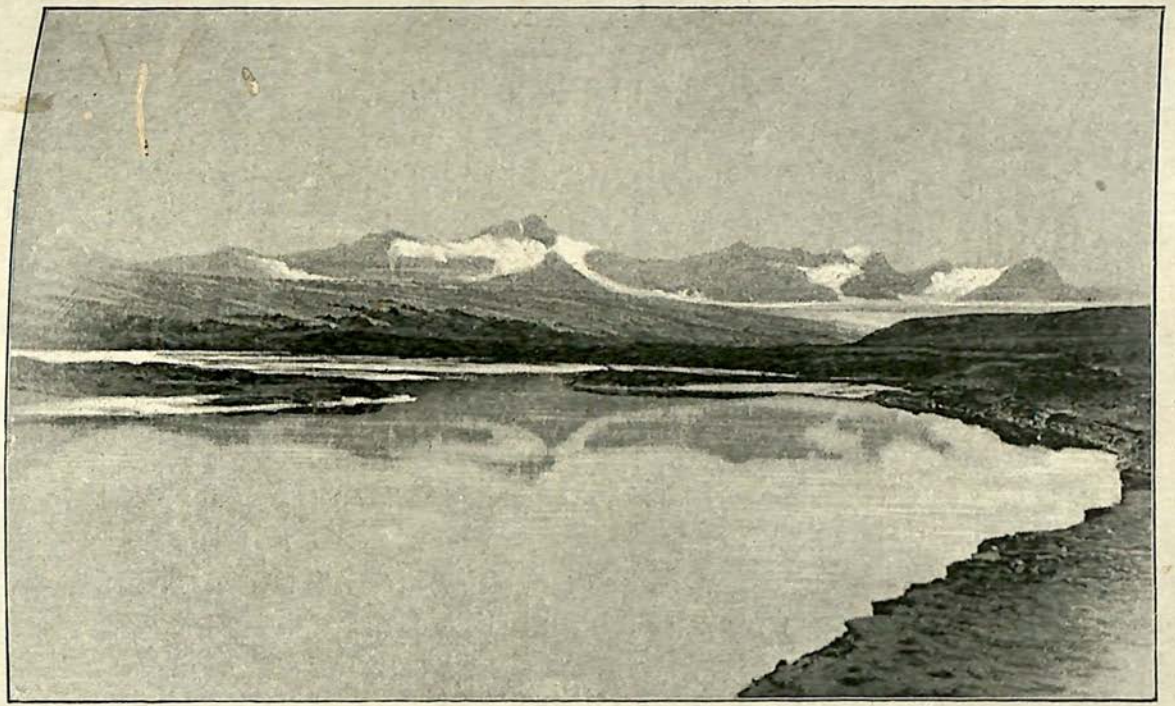
THERE are dismal tales told us of shipwrecked folks wandering down to the huts on this fiord in the long winter's night and dying every one of scurvy. For surely this must be a terrible country in the winter when darkness envelopes everything, where there is no wood to build fires with, and no vegetation, only the cold, cold snow. But to us it was wonderfully pretty going up the fiords with a grey dreamy haze over the far mountains, over the *very* far mountains I ought to say, as one can see such a distance in this land, where no smoke has ever come and where in many parts no man has ever trod. A land, too, without the mosquito; where, in spite of the summer beauty of the glaciers and heights which generally seem to attract him, in spite of the rich delicious luxury of the

PULLING OUR BOAT ASHORE IN DICKSON'S BAY.

long warm month (no! I ought to say months, as they enjoy at least six weeks of a warm climate here), in spite of the sunshine and brilliancy, charms which he languishes for but never finds on British soil, the beautiful mosquito is absent. Yes, he has lost one spot on earth which he might make into a perfect hell, if he could only get there; for, if there is one summer paradise in this world, where his awful buzz is not heard, where sinful man can lie quietly basking in the sunlight, and take his rest unbothered by mosquitoes or flies, it is here. Suddenly one day Jack observed a minute something apparently resting on his hand; so what must he needs do but obliterate that unconscious something. Yes, with one fell blow he curtailed its onward journey through life, and slew it, thinking that it was a harmful beast: but it was not that demon of iniquity which we had mistaken it for, and proved to be quite incapable of doing us any harm.'

The second day that we were out, we had a somewhat distant view of a strange animal coursing along as though it were going somewhere, for something, or

some one; and apparently unable to find him, her, or it. A strange weird beast, which we took for a ghost, or the restless spirit of some mortal, who having shaken off this cloak of flesh, had clad itself in robes of white, and was thusly for ever wandering about the land in an unquiet state, never never stopping or finding rest. It was about midnight on August 10, a chill air was blowing down the fiord, and the moon—or parish lantern as we call it at home—was in her zenith (wherever that may be), but we could not see her as the sun was constantly getting in our eyes whenever we looked up. At this creepy hour of the night we paused in our rowing, for the men were weary with long work and laborious exertions, or else they were lazy and wanted to light their pipes. We found ourselves now in a bend of the fiord—rowing up against a strong tide—where the mighty mountains frowned down on us, as we pushed our way onward through that almost silent night. Then amid the profound silence which reigned over everything, there was a pause, and our boatswain suddenly said in a hoarse whisper, 'Look there!' as he pointed with the skinny forefinger of his right hand



DISTANT MOUNTAIN, FROM ICE FIORD, BETWEEN 3,000 AND 4,000 FEET HIGH.

towards the beach, which was not more than two hundred yards away. We therefore all gazed, while some of us saw it, and others did not. I was fortunately able to discern this creature. It seemed to be a huge bird, not in mid-air, or in mid-ocean, but on the moss-covered shores, running at a terrible pace on

A STRANGE BIRD

two legs, but not often moving its wings ; as though it contained a secret hidden down there in its soul which it was longing to conceal, but did not know what on earth to do with it or where the dickens to put it. It looked as if it were scared to death at something, but did not know what in the world had frightened it so ; or as though it saw a 'something'

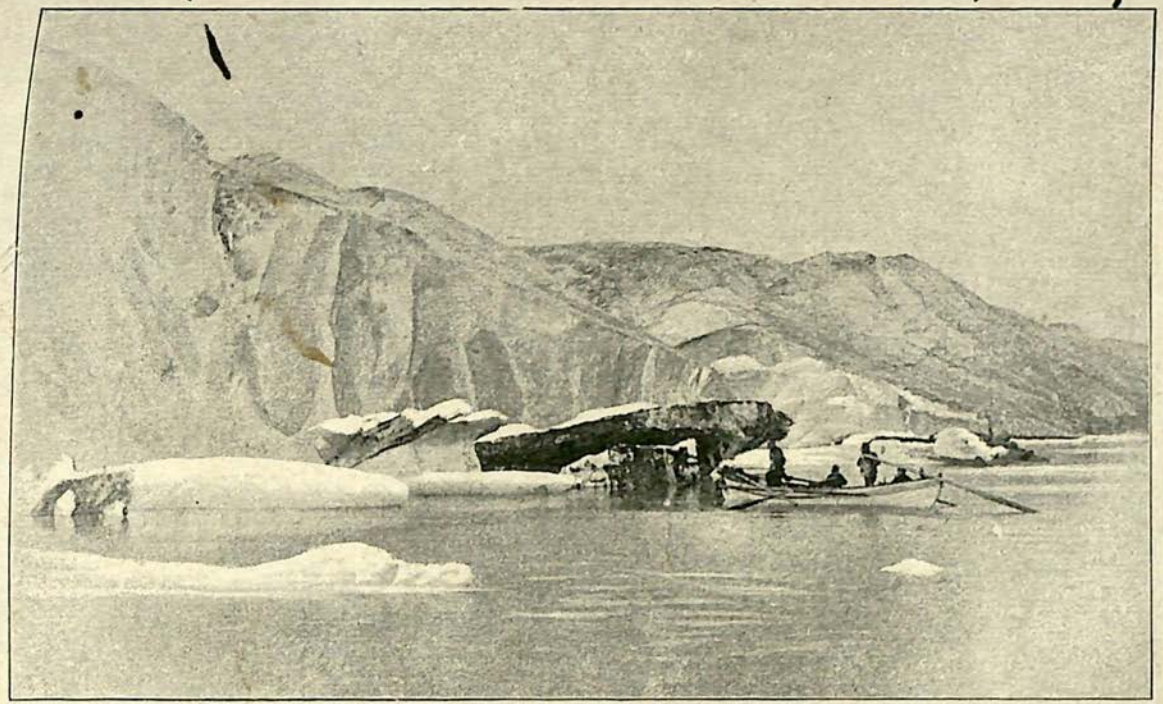
following, and would give its kingdom to be out of the fell destroyer's way, but for some reason could not summon up courage to open its wings, although it occasionally shrugged them, as though longing to fly but not daring to. This was not a small bird, but a very large one, larger in fact than a turkey, and as one of the men so aptly suggested, it must be a Wagga Wagga. What is a Wagga Wagga? I do not know. What was this? Well, we did not know either, so perhaps this was a Wagga Wagga. It had, so far as we could see through the field glasses, a grey body, and beneath this were darkly befouled legs, but it never stopped from the first moment that we saw it, but just ran on and on, not away from us but across our vision. We watched this beast with sickly horror as it sped over that moss-covered plain, till at length it turned a corner and was lost to our vision for ever. As we have none of us heard of a large running bird up on these shores, clad as this one was in the same coloured tunic all over, we gave it up and proceeded on our journey. This lucid description may enable some genius among my unfortunate readers to solve the mystery.

We made some capital tents out of boat sails, which were raised on oars instead of poles. On one of these oars Jack's coat was put. A coat which when we left home was quite new and eminently respectable, but which now had become such a deep black colour, so covered with scraps of paint and patches of seal's blood, that the fashionable tailor whom Jack honours with his custom would have sunk into a premature grave could he have beheld it; and we were obliged to tell any Norwegian that we encountered that this coat was *brown*, as much as to say, 'Deny that statement if you dare.' Certainly they could deny it with truth, as it was a sort of mixture of spotty black and shiny sepia, and we saw that even if he had swept his coat, it would not have removed the grease spots which lingered all up the sleeves and down the back. But to continue.

The men cut pegs out of one of the old Siberian trees which we have already spoken of as lying on the coast; they put great bits of moss all round to keep the draught out, and lit an enormous fire of drift-wood, so that in turning in we pretended it was night,

although when we went to bed the third time, it was six A.M. by that guileful misleading standard of time, that masterpiece of iniquity, 'my watch.'

What a lovely night that was, or rather morning, when we camped just opposite to one of the enormous north shore glaciers! The sailors pitched our tent on an outlying promontory not more than two hundred yards away from where the beginning of this extensive field came down to the sea; from this, its ends stretched away for a matter of twenty to thirty miles along the coast. The edges of the glacier lying in great broken-off cliffs, like a wall about fifty feet high, and going down into the sea, Heaven knows how far, then travelling back in one perpetual ever-running ocean of ice, and covering the whole land as far as we could see, except here and there where some dark mountain rock would stand out, looking doubly black against its whiteness. Now and again we heard borne to us on this summer air a terrible sound, which was merely huge bits of this ever-moving ice sea being rent by their own weight from off the high wall, and falling into the fiord, or perhaps deep chasms in the broad ex-



END OF GLACIER COMING DOWN INTO ICE FIORD.

panse of glacier parting. It was such a deep distant groaning, that it filled one with awe, and seemed in this age of realities to be scarcely possible.

On one side of our little promontory stretched out before us were the deep still waters of the silent fiord, the quiet of which was only occasionally broken by the birds calling a distant lullaby to our ears, and the splash of a Mollie bathing as only Mollies do bathe, making as much fuss and dash about it as you can possibly conceive; now with both his wings beneath the water and his head out, and now laving his head and tail beneath the summer sea and his wings above it. We feel sure that could he see the Mollies tubbing it would make a Quaker smile, their manœuvres being quite ridiculous.

Then the coast whose nearer shelving banks were bent down to the water's edge, all moss-covered, touched these gentle sparkling seas on one side, while on the other the boat was quietly moored in a little still secluded bay, above which came the beach, with a smouldering fire, and empty cups and spoon handles catching the far-off glint of the sun; with a tin or two of

Australian beef and plates, the remnant of our sailors' last feed before they turned into their sail-covered oar-bestretched tent. In the distance were mid-summer clouds, harmless, beautiful things indeed for the much-beshaken sea-driven wanderers to gaze at,

OUR SAILORS' TENT

and beneath that came the fearsome rocky heights of ice down to the water's edge : the water, which had perpetual little waves on its surface. This was only where it came in contact with the glacier, for the sea close to that enormous field of ice was constantly disturbed with a wind blowing off the freezing ice-bed on to the

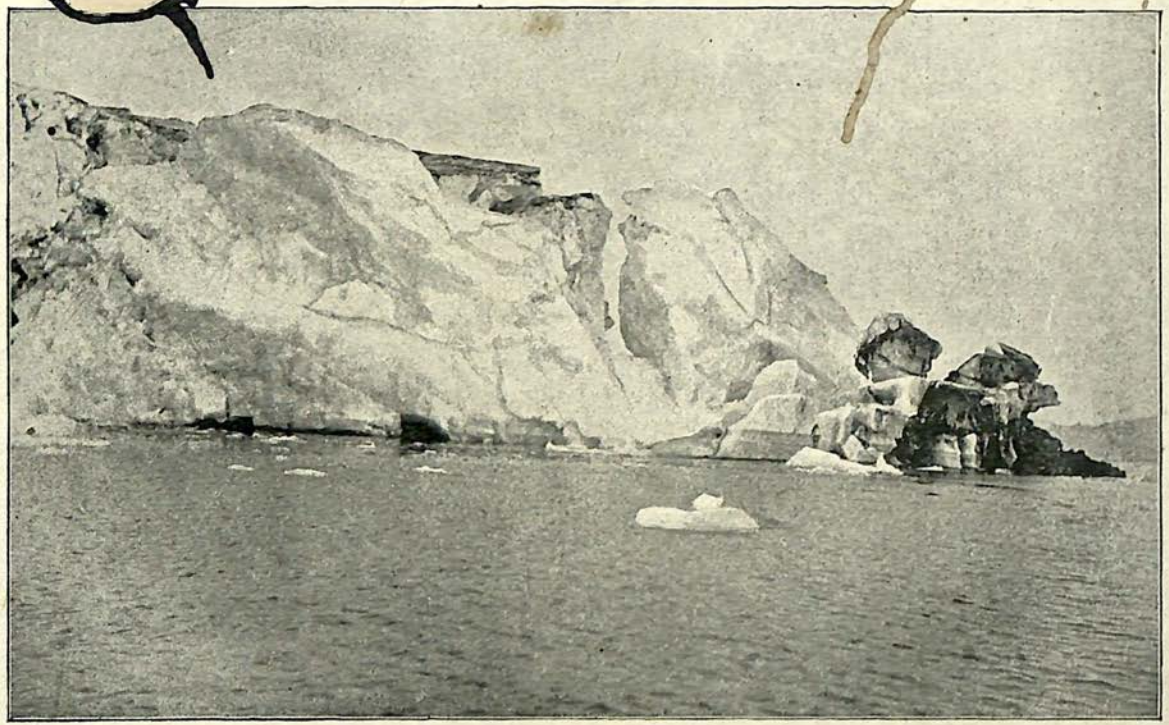
warm surface of the water, probably caused by this body of ice being embedded in a temperate sea.

On our last morning we started off for the nearest place from which we could get a good view of the glacier, wishing to photograph its descent into the sea. The only difficulty that we found was, there were such quantities of miles of perpetual glacial wall, that we could not decide on the best locality in this continual abrupt conclusion to perpetrate the deed. We also tried our best to scale the perpendicular walls and take it from the top, but in this we failed, as it was too precipitous for us to get a footing. Having succeeded in taking three photographs, we finally set out to row the twenty-one miles back to the ship across the fiord. The first part of this journey was beautifully calm and still, but presently, when we had crossed over five or six miles, the silence of the sea was changed, dark clouds of mist came sweeping up, overshadowing the blue mountains, and making angry little waves break beneath our wooden-sided boat.

Then the lug sail was hoisted, great gusts of westerly wind came eddying along, and we found the water

swishing past at such a rate that rowing had to be given up. Then the water came over the boat's side, the wind suddenly seemed to turn bitterly cold, and we soon found ourselves drenched to the skin; for did you ever know a sailor put on his tarpaulin jacket before he was wet through? and we were acting the part of sailors now. Really we wished ourselves anywhere else in this world than where we were, but Jack kept looking up and saying, 'Grand breeze, ain't it?'

Soon one man was put to bale out the water, for already we had taken in the two reefs in our sail and the boat kept shipping seas. The last ten miles of our journey we accomplished at a tearing gallop, as the wind seemed to veer round more favourably as we pressed forward. It was then that we shivering landsmen pretended to be sailorly and to enjoy it, but when we saw those huge little waves come foaming up and dash themselves against the side of our boat, ducking us all over with salt spray, it gave us such an enormous amount of uneasiness and discomfort that in our hearts we envied those gentlemen of England who live at home at ease, and even the landlubbers lying 'down



ABRUPT CONCLUSION OF GLACIER IN ICE FIORD.

below, below, below,' or other such-like creations of the poet's fancy. Well, an end came at last, and when we had spent just seven hours on the deep, we reached the haven where we would be, for which from our souls we thanked Heaven.

During this stormy time I was astonished to see Jack with a *wet through* book of Schiller's poems turned the wrong way up on his knee; and in those hours of cold and darkness, when the wind was blowing its most bitter blasts, he sat there with a *very* pale face, apparently unmoved by the conflicting elements, engaged in thinking over Schiller's plays. I could not at first imagine why Jack had taken these works with him. What pleasure can the soul of the sportsman find in Schiller's 'Historical Dramas?' There is a picture in the beginning of this book of General Wallenstein, painted originally by Vandyck, which must indeed be a very interesting and beautiful family portrait, but it is scarcely calculated to give a fellow heart and confidence on an occasion like the present; he looks particularly dismal, and the thing in his hand reminds me strongly of my most agonising school days, when

the head master took me by the ear, saying, 'Now look here, my boy, you'd better be uncommonly careful how you answer me, and be quick, or else !—well, you know what the consequence will be.' General Wallenstein has also rather a bilious look about the eyes, a waxed moustache, and altogether, even in our most comfortable moments, we turn from the contemplation of such a picture with a feeling that the background of this mountainous scene is rather ghastly, but we would not care to play with the man in the foreground unless he would hide that stick and promise to play fair.

However, Jack had a reason for taking these poems : not that he was ever sea-sick, nor was he love-sick, in fact he did not feel any of those qualms which are the germs of real poetry, but he had already read every syllable that was worth perusing in our six shelves—every work with the remotest novelistic character had been swept over by his eagle eye. Not that he had digested any of these frivolous books, as I think that next time he goes on a voyage he will be equally ready to read any one of them ; nothing

therefore remained unexplored by him in this ship but Schiller's 'Revolt,' and that 'Revolt' is not worth much now, as the sea came over it 'tremenjus,' so that it was fetched on to the 'Traveller's' deck in a condition of pulp horrible to contemplate.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN EIDER DUCK'S INTERIOR

WE have before this remarked what exceedingly short pipes our sailors smoked, but this was evidently not their fault, for the clays which we had aboard the ship were wonderfully soft, so soft, that we know to our cost you can bite them in two with such ease that, if these sailoring folk forgot for one moment that it was a clay which they had betwixt their teeth, and thought instead that it was a morsel of macaroni, they were quite sure not only to bite it in two, but to devour the morsel thus split off.

In our boat, on this trip, we had taken four extra clays, and we foolishly found, on quitting the ship, that only things which we had left behind were our wooden pipes. So that we had to fall back, together with the

men, on these four. This was a sad trial, not because they were disagreeable to pull at, as on the contrary their softness only made them the more nicotine-consuming and delicious, but on our second day out I fell asleep in the stern sheets with a clay between my teeth, so that when I awoke the mouthpiece was consumed, or at any rate I could not find it in my mouth, and Jack said, 'Look, you careless dog, what you've dropped on the floor,' meaning the bottom of the whaleboat. There was the pipe all smashed to smithereens by its fall. With such fatalities how could we six clay smokers keep those six pipes. We were just starved out of pipes when we got back on board ship again, and two of the sailors were now burning their cheeks because the stems had become so low. What would have happened if we had been obliged to stay another day I cannot tell, but one can understand now how mutiny may arise at sea.

One of the Eider ducks that were killed had a quantity of food on its way down. We curtailed the course of digestion by shooting that bird,

and as the steward felt something very hard down in its throat, we compelled it to reproduce. There were four great shell-fish, which were called by the sailors 'mother limpets' and were rather larger than the ordinary big garden snail-shell, but as hard as iron; also this same duck had aboard five curled-up animals like ridiculously exaggerated woodlice—only with a thick cardboardy skin—about two inches long, which our sailors called 'Horse Buckeyes,' but I believe the name should be 'Idothea Entomon.' If I were endowed with gastric juices that could digest such a crawly lump of legs and shell, I should no longer hesitate to accept the office of Alderman in my native County Council. One of the ducks had also concealed in its stomach, amid a whole barrowload of small stones, an ordinary pin about *two* inches long. It was a brass pin, or looked like one, and had come from where I cannot say, but it had failed utterly to digest this. I had begun to imagine that with this flooring of large pebbles (about the size of swan shot) they could digest anything, from a Jew's

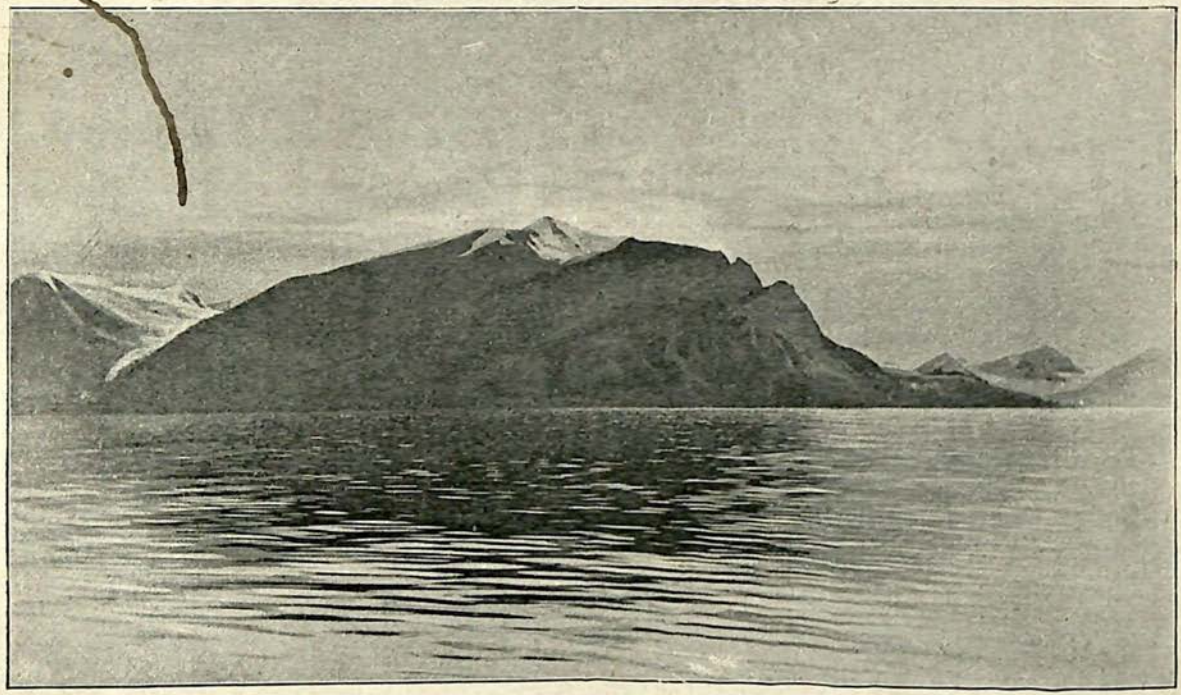
harp to a piece of platinum, but it is now proved that this is not the case, for the brass pin must have been in the bird's stomach for a long while, to judge from its appearance, and from the fact that no ladies using brass pins reside in Spitzbergen.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOMEWARD BOUND

WHEN we arrived eventually aboard ship from our outing, it being one o'clock in the morning, we went to bed, and early the next day, which was August 13, left our anchorage bound for home. There were thirteen hundred miles of ocean to cross before we could hope to see our native shores, which we did not do for three weeks and four days.

What a mess it was, starting! What a confusion of ropes filled up the decks! It was just possible to walk from one end of the ship to the other on a litter of downtrodden ropes, without room between them for the little footsteps of a two-year child, as the whole place was just 'larded down' with these ingredients. There was a little wind blowing straight in our face, which towards evening died out altogether. When I asked



DEAD MAN'S HEAD AT THE ENTRANCE OF ICE FIORD.

the captain where it came from, he replied with a smile, 'It is clock calm and a southerly wind,' which I believe was a quotation from somewhere. Then I said, 'But is the wind getting further round?' and he answered, 'Well, yes, it is shying a little.' I saw it was time to go on deck and see for myself just what the wind was up to. But on deck silence reigned, except where the windless sails kept flapping in the most disheartening way. It remained placid all around us in this way for seven days, and at night on the seventh day we had made only sixty miles from our anchorage. The mouth of Icefiord becomes very narrow, and as the soundings do not seem to be properly known, when fog came down on us and we had to tack very slowly up against a headwind, I asked the second mate what we should do if we were regularly hemmed in by fog? 'Well,' he answered, 'we shall have to fork our way out somehow,' which seemed a delightful idea but rather difficult to manage, as in most places this fiord is exceedingly deep, or else it is too shallow to float a ship like ours.

I could not but think that there was something

wrong with the arrangements of the earth's crust here, and that all of Spitzbergen had got out of bed the wrong way; for it is very curious how the whole of the north shore which looks south should be a mass of ice; whereas the south shore (facing of course north), is pretty nearly destitute of glaciers.

One morning I heard Jack on deck, saying to the captain, 'What a remarkably northerly-looking sky this is!' Now, what appearance a northerly sky may present I do not know, but I suppose that there was something about it which struck him as looking peculiarly that way: as he had now been four months at sea, he may have acquired a weather eye. Presently he added, 'Don't you think that the air has rather a northerly smell about it, or is it the galley that I smell up here?' The captain laughingly replied, 'Well, I don't know, Mr. Jack, but the ship is making away to the nor'-west.' I do not know how it was, but the wind came from the north, in our favour, all that day. To our disgust a great fog was being propelled by the northerly blast, and presently we saw what they call a 'fog scoffer,' which is a little rainbow with a very

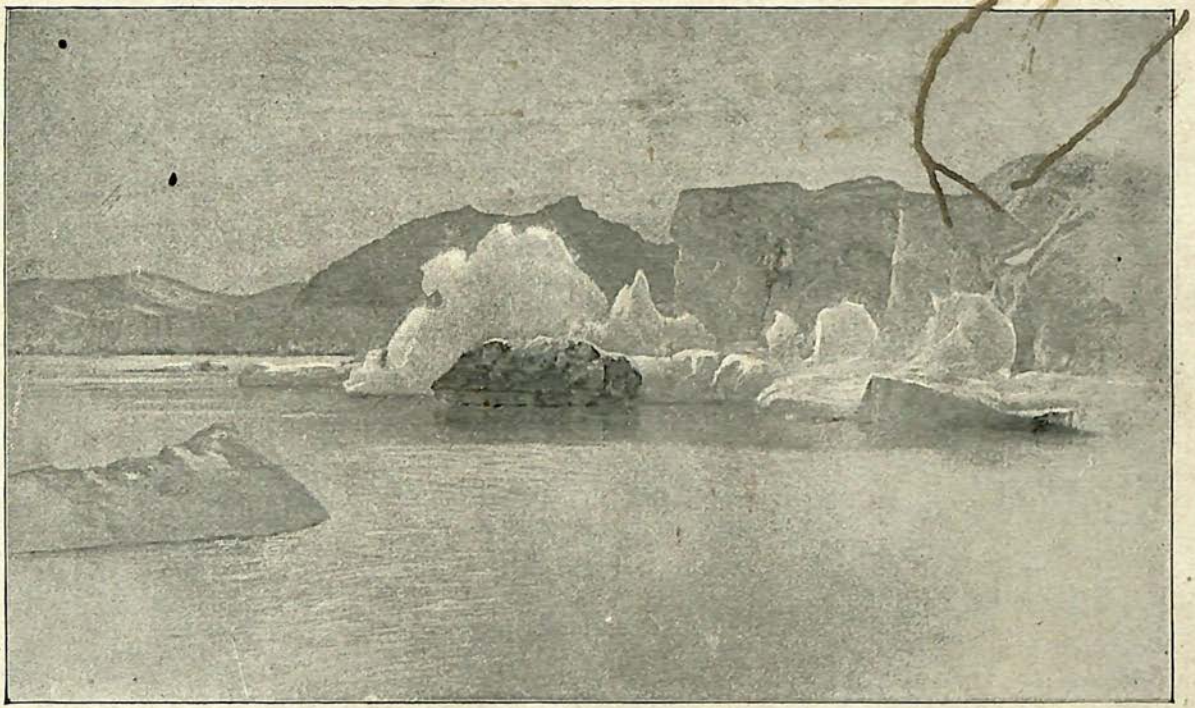
small arc opposite to the sun, a thing which I do not remember to have encountered anywhere out of the arctic regions, but is of pretty common occurrence up there. It is, of course, quite close to you, as it would be impossible to see more than three hundred yards away, at most.

As the wind had been blowing in our favour all that day, we had a bet about the weather for the following twenty-four hours; for Jack said that if this wind continued to increase as it had been doing all that morning we should be scudding under 'bare poles' all the morrow, and as this northerly blast was creating such a turmoil in the ocean, we should want nothing more than our 'bearskin' to push us along. This article had been stretched on a wooden frame and erected on the mizzen mast, that it might dry in the wind. Having no coin of the realm with us, we had to arrange this bet in cartridges, and we talked of the current cartridge of the realm. I therefore bet him ten to one in best brass express rifle cartridges that it would not be necessary to skin our masts bare before the blast on the following day, and

the list of these useless brass powder-cases; as, now that we were 'homeward bound,' there was no advantage in accumulating such brazen rubbish.

One of the summer nights when there was a great sea on, Jack stood looking at the waves, apart from his nautical companions, alone in thought, surrounded only by the deserted sea. A howling wind was rising dead against us, and the mournful cry of Mollies was the only sound that we could hear besides the whistling of the breeze through our shrouds. He stood with his hands in his trousers' pockets for twenty minutes before anyone disturbed him. Then I said, 'You seem low, Jack; what is it that ails you?' 'Well, I was wondering,' he replied, 'whether one of my young horses would jump these banks' (meaning the waves) 'with fourteen stone on his back, and if you put him at 'em, just where he would take off.'

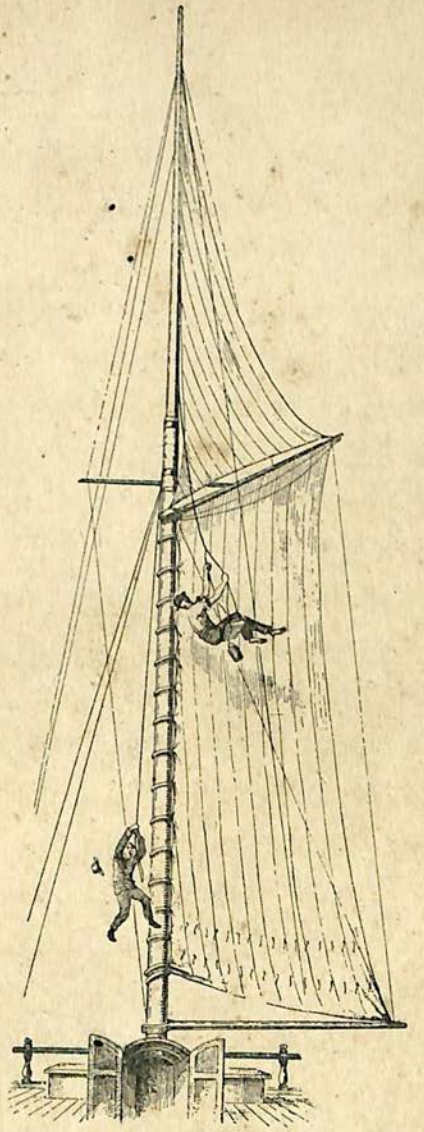
Although on our return journey we had nothing particular to amuse ourselves with, still the sailors were kept busily employed, and amongst other trifles they spent nearly the whole of two days greasing the



THE LAST OF THE ICE.

masts. What was the use of putting fat on these poles? It seemed to us to be an utterly useless task, but it is necessary always to keep your sailors employed, otherwise could there be a more hopelessly silly thing? Grease is a very useful substance——for boots. We literally saturated our sea-boots with it, thus making them limp and water resisting. But you will have to put a great deal of grease on your masts before they will become limper; indeed, when you have got them as flexible as a water lily's stem, where is the use, and what is the advantage of it? Yet we cannot think what other object there can be in larding them all over, unless it is to make them bendy. One morning the captain said with a sigh of satisfaction, 'We shall have time to-day to grease our masts,' as if he had been longing for the last ten weeks to execute this job, as if it was the most momentous thing in the world, and he had at length found the opportunity for doing it. Creating a great slime on them seemed to us truly useless labour. However, I will just tell you how it is done. A sailor first gets the wooden seat of a swing, which is called

a 'bowsen's chair,' and having attached short ropes thereto—making a triangle, two sides of which are ropes and the third the seat—he carries this up the rigging and leaves it in some impossible locality high up on the mast. Then he descends again for his pot of hot dripping, which has been obtained from the cook, and with it mounts aloft. Having climbed up there—as far as any reasonable man would wish to go, that is about twelve feet above the rope ladders which run up the sides of all the masts—he ties this triangular swing on to a rope which goes up from this place to the top of nowhere, and there runs over a pulley. Seating himself in it, he shouts to two sailors down below, who thereupon keep pulling the other end, and by this means he ascends higher and higher, till he is lost in the clouds of mist which keep rolling over the masts. This is where the operation of greasing the mast begins. As he gets each two feet of this lofty pine lubricated, he continues hallooing out to a single sailor who is now holding the other end of the rope on deck, to let the chair go a bit.



A HORRIBLE STATE OF THINGS

The sailor looked such a little chap, up one hundred and twenty feet above our heads, when we could see him for the misty umbrage with which he was enwrapped. Doubtless he would have looked bigger if he had descended with a run from that lofty eminence thereby seriously indenting the Roman nose which is the pride of my family and which was held up aloft as I watched his movements. Fortunately he did not come down. I say fortunately, because the great Mr. Mitchell, who had been put to hold the other end of the rope down on deck, amongst other trifles did not know that it would be necessary to grasp his end of the rope firmly, and wind it round a 'taxpin' which was handy, but was going to simply hold it in his hand, which would have been all right if Mr. Mitchell were heavier than that sailor; but supposing that the sailor were heavier than Mr. Mitchell, then it is passing terrible to think of the consequences. Happily he did not succeed in doing just what he thought should be done, as the captain detected his manœuvres and commanded him to fasten his end

round the pin just in time. Thus we were saved an appalling catastrophe, which would otherwise surely have taken place; and the sailor, having greased the whole mast, was returned in safety to his mother decks.

CHAPTER XXX

THE END OF THE VOYAGE

THE account of our voyage now draws to an end. There would be no use in dragging my readers over the weary sea where they have already wasted so much time. Even we had had enough seagoing experience to last us almost to eternity. Now we were homeward bound it is true, but oh! so slowly, and with such perpetual headwinds, that in those times I should have recommended all future travellers, however fond they may be of sea life, however they may languish after the wild, the boundless ocean, however they may long for a time of freedom from the worries and cares attendant on existence, to make their journeys in a steamer instead of a sailing ship, for nothing could be more vexatious than to have a

southerly wind blowing for ten days straight away when you wanted to go south.

A gentleman writing in a book called 'A Memoir of the Northern Ocean,' published in 1820, says that the winds were 'chiefly southerly.' Our experience differs from his entirely; I should have said, that whichever way you may happen to be going, the wind comes right in your face, or else it will be a dead and breathless calm, without a flicker of wind to disturb the serenity of the seas. Therefore if ever a captain wishes to know what sort of breezes he is likely to find up there, you can answer him thus wise; and assure him that if the wind is the same other years as it was with us, he will always have either 'a dead headwind' or 'a dead calm,' and you may add that Jack says there is a great time coming.

With this most moderate headwind, we were only able to proceed thirty miles a day, and we fortunately saw no steamers, otherwise our gentle seafaring spirits would not have been able to bear the strain. At length, on September 7, we began packing up our things for departure from the 'Traveller.'

After four months and one week's absence, we sighted the granite walls, the harbour, and the many fishing boats of that ugly little town Peterhead again. How very sweet to look upon was its blurred mass of masts, how full of life and business; how delightful was the change from the distant view of sea, only sea, to the teeming thoroughfares of this Scottish town. After being so long on the deep, it gave us infinite pleasure to say good-bye to our most abandoned but now humbled steward, and we found a moment's satisfaction in casting off our long sea-boots and oil-skin jackets. But it was heartrending when we had to bid adieu to Peterhead, and, above all, to our captain and his 'Traveller.' We feel sure that we shall never again live on such a well ordered or managed ship as she was, for, except that our bacon was a trifle too fat, we had absolutely nothing that we could find fault with.

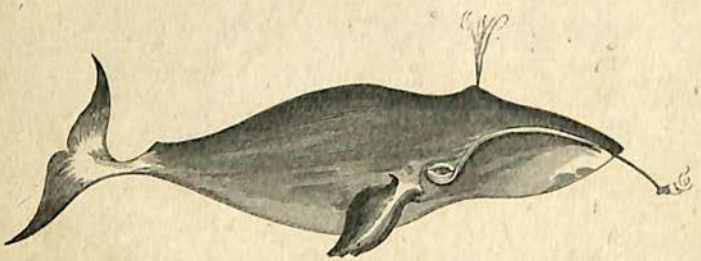
CHAPTER XXXI

WHALES

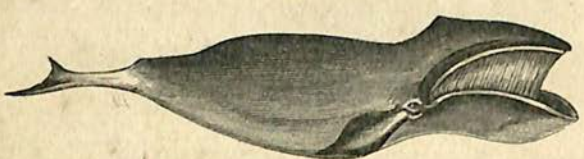
THE whale is a mammal, not a fish. It has warm blood, and suckles its young, which seem the most obvious distinction between beasts and fishes. But unlike other animals they bring forth their young in the sea and suckle them underneath the water. I do not think that the Greenland whale ever produces more than one young one at a time.

Wheresoever a few whales are gathered together, there you are sure to observe a great multitude of Mollies, who seem to refresh themselves amazingly on the oil which is spread out over the troubled waters after the whale has left a deposit on its surface. They generally syringe out a quantity of air, and we should say a little water, about once a minute when

they are swimming near the surface, but how long they can remain under the sea and away from the



SMOKING



YAWNING

IN AGONY

THE GREENLAND RIGHT WHALE

air is not exactly known. We are assured that they can at any rate stay beneath the sea's surface for

from three-quarters of an hour to an hour without coming up to take a fresh breath; they do not actually breathe anything but air out of these blowholes, but doubtless the sea water gets mixed up with the air, as you can generally see exactly how high this spout goes. It comes through a hole in the top of their bodies which I suppose would be called the 'nasal orifice,' otherwise there is no nose, and this blowhole is situated one-third down the body. I mean that if you took the whole length of the whale and divided it into three parts, these two nostrils would come just at the end of the first part. I was told that they also hear through these blowholes; but, mind you, I was only told so, as without doubt they have an ear away there beneath the sea's surface: what use it may be to them the great Heavens only know.

If you call that enormous portion forward of the eyes, occupying rather over a third of the whole body, its head, it is taken up chiefly with a huge jaw, and with this jaw you would think that to swallow a whole girls' school, blackboards and all, would be nothing: but, on the contrary, the throat of this huge brute is so very

minute, that he cannot swallow anything much larger than we can. True he draws a vast quantity of water into his mouth, but this is done merely to extract the animalculæ from it. He sucks in these liquid gallons through an aperture which is at the end of the whalebone just above his tongue, and then, curling his tongue over this opening, shuts it up so that the water has to find its way out again between those long, hairy, sieve-like gills, the animalculæ adhering to the whalebone fringe while the water percolates through, on its way out again. Therefore when one considers that nothing the size of a tablespoon can go down their throats, it would seem quite impossible for a man of Jonah's size to be swallowed by a whale: but this only makes it the more miraculous because it seems the more impossible, and I do not doubt that it was some other sort of whale that lived in the Mediterranean, as certainly the Greenland Right whale now is confined wholly to the Arctic Seas.

I should think that it was necessary for the whale to have a long mouth to prevent these hanging millions from getting mixed up with his uvula, which

I've a notion might cause him to cough violently, and in the cold salt sea this would be the beginning of all sorts of trouble. The little whalebones that you have in your stays are merely morsels split off the huge sticks in the whale's jaws, which are more the shape of the central staff of a cocoanut leaf; sometimes they are as much as twelve feet six inches long, and at one end eleven inches broad. Each Right whale has about three hundred and forty bones on either side of his mouth, and each of these bones is quite covered with long black hairs, some of which are one foot six inches in length. But these main whalebones are only separated from each other about a quarter of an inch, and each one has hanging down from it innumerable multitudes of long hairs, so that it would be difficult if you were an animalcule to find your way out again, if you once got into the whale's jaws.

The Greenland whale is the one that I have made a sketch of. Its jawbone only averages fifteen feet in length: its total weight is said to be seventy tons. The eyes are placed where I beg leave to assert no living creature has any right to have eyes. They

are in the middle of the cheek, and at the end of the stomach, rather lower than half way down his body, quite close to the armpits, or rather I should say to the pectoral fins, and exactly where the upper and lower jaws meet; so that if he opened his mouth too wide, it would hurt his eye very much; or supposing he wished, as the Yankees do, to chew tobacco, it would be exceedingly painful; if seeing the beautiful and charming female whale passing he felt inclined to grin and wink one of his obtuse-looking black eyes, imagine the consequences in this salt, salt sea, with his mouth running over with tobacco juice; or if he merely wished to hold a pipe in his mouth, as in the picture, how appallingly disagreeable the close proximity of the smoke to his eye would be.

The whale's eyes being fixed in this peculiar altitude must prevent them from seeing directly in front, and I should say that there was nothing gained by this ocular situation, as it is obvious that they can see nothing immediately behind them. Their captors when approaching come up in multitudes and boatloads full, from behind, when the whale remains quite unconscious

of the discomfort of their too pressing attentions until he has got the galling harpoon fixed in his person by a shot from a species of cross between a small cannon and a very much overgrown rifle, and then his game is generally over. However, this is not always the case, as we were told of an occurrence which only happened last year when a Finner whale was in this way shot from a smallish steam launch, belonging, I believe, to one Svend Foyn of Vadso, who is the greatest whale killer of his day. This whale seeing that he had not got the harpoon lodged in a vital spot, set out for a long cruise, dragging the launch with reversed engines after him. I am told that he proceeded easily at the rate of six knots an hour for a matter of forty-eight or fifty miles. At last those aboard the boat observed that they were getting right out into the Atlantic Ocean, and that it was of no use trying to stop, as the whale seemed capable and anxious to drag them across to New York if they stuck to it; they therefore cut the rope and let him go.

The bone covering his brain is so thick that no express bullet will penetrate it.

The Finner whales, which are much the largest and the commonest about Spitzbergen, are collected by a Norwegian company off the coast of Norway, and disposed of at Vadso, where there are factories for boiling down the oil. I suppose that it is eventually bottled off as a sweet-smelling lubrication, but the aroma at that spot is most appallingly disagreeable, as the oil from the Finners is so nauseous in its scent that we as a nation cannot stand it, and therefore they are not imported into our fair island.

I remember going over the factories at Vadso some years ago with my travelling companions (another Englishman and his wife), and after spending the whole afternoon inspecting these interesting works, both this British lady and myself were *sick* from the smell of the oil. On the other hand, the scent of the *Greenland* whale oil is just perfection as far as whale oil is concerned. It is true that a deathly nausea seized me when I went over the factories in Peterhead where this substance, having been boiled, was exposed, but I may be particularly susceptible to smells, and believe

that this grease is as pure, and sweetly aromatic as well, as castor oil often is.

The Greenland whale is only half the length of the Finner, this latter averaging about ninety feet, but then he is nearly double his depth in thickness. To the eye of the ordinary observer, the great difference between the two whales is that the Finner has a large fin on his back, and the Greenland whale has none. The Finner has also scarcely any whalebone compared with his cousin, or rather we should say with his 'german cousin,' as he seems to be very distantly connected with his fat friend. We should be inclined to think that the former of these two mammals fed off quite different and much larger food than the latter, from the distance apart of his whalebones and their comparative scarcity.

The Right whale has a black or very dark skin up above, and down below it becomes almost white; this is about an inch thick, and quite hairless, like a porpoise's. Then beneath this comes another skin which is half an inch thick, and then it is covered all over

the body with blubber about one foot eight inches deep. It is from this blubber that they make the whale oil. The fat over the whole of his person, combined with so-called bone, is worth 1,500*l.* to 2,000*l.* for each whale, so that if a ship goes out and catches three whales in the season (which is now a very rare occurrence in the Arctic Ocean) it puts a handsome profit in the hands of the owners, in spite of the shipload of sailors that it is necessary to carry for this purpose. There were only four whales caught this season by three ships from Peterhead that went up to entangle them, but I believe this is exceptional: and if continued would soon make Greenland whale fishing a thing of the past. Whether the whales have found out that it is not safe to display themselves up here, or whether they have become nearly extinct, is not properly known, but it is thought that this huge mammal is merely wide awake, and does not disport himself in these latitudes because he found that the sea was patched over with portions of the cut-up skin of his intimates and relatives, and therefore took himself off to more northern climes. One of our most successful Peterhead whale fishers

(whom we might almost call the Prince of Whales) says that they are just like stable rats, lying in the close pack and only coming out silently to feed when no one is looking. Then, the minute a ship heaves in sight, they scuttle away and hide themselves effectually amongst the huge blocks of frozen sea.

OUR UNITED BAG

THE Latin names of the Hooded and Harp Seals respectively are, 'Stemmatopus cristatus' and 'Phoca Grœnlandica.' The sailors called them 'Bladdernose' and 'Saddleback.'

We killed on the trip eight hundred and seventy-six seals—from which we potted off about twenty-one tons of oil—also four reindeer and one polar bear.

Then there were the following different sorts of birds shot on the voyage.

Proper names	*Sailors' names*
Brent Geese	—
Eider Ducks	—
Mallemokes	—
Sandpipers	—
Black Guillemots	Dovekies

Proper names	*Sailors' names*
Brünnich's Guillemots	Looms
Little Awks	Rotges
Glaucous Gulls	Burgomasters
Kittiwakes	Tatarats
Sea Parrots	Arctic Puffins
Ivory Gulls	Snowbirds
Richardson's Skuas	Boatswains
Arctic Terns	Pectorals

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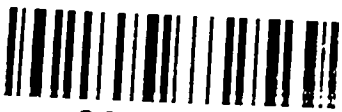
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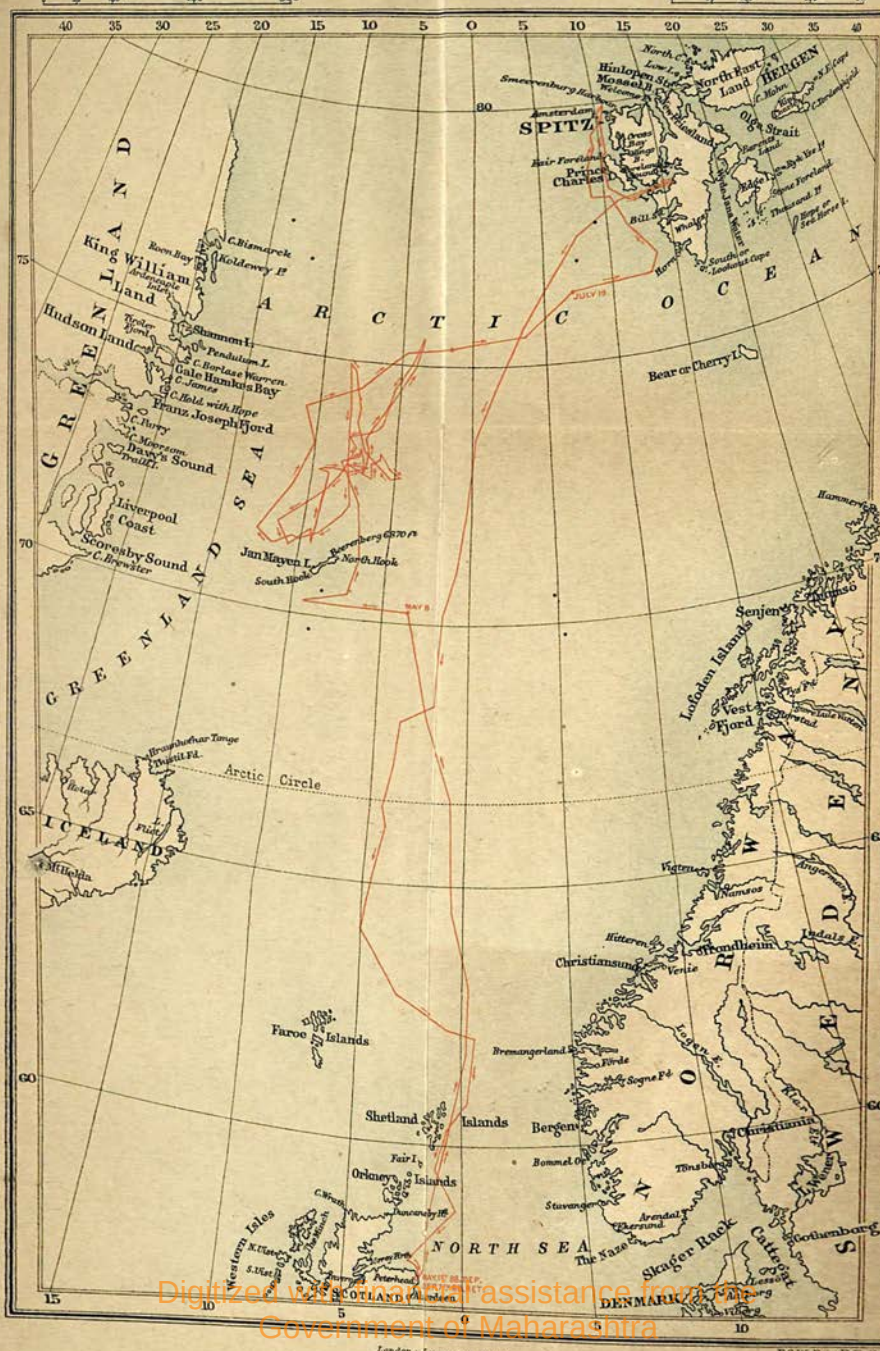
MAP SHOWING COURSE OF THE "TRAVELLER" FROM MAY 1st TO SEPTr 7th 1888.



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